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Ch

The Evening

• • and • •

The Morning

"AND THERE WAS EVENING
AND THERE WAS MORNING,
ONE DAY." (R.V.) . . .
. . . GENESIS I. 5.

The Evening.
• • and • •
The Morning

BY THE REV. . . .
ARMSTRONG
BLACK . . .

LONDON HODDER AND
STOUGHTON 27
PATERNOSTER ROW 1900

BV4233

B59

Printed by Hazell, Watson, & Viney, Ltd., London and Aylesbury.

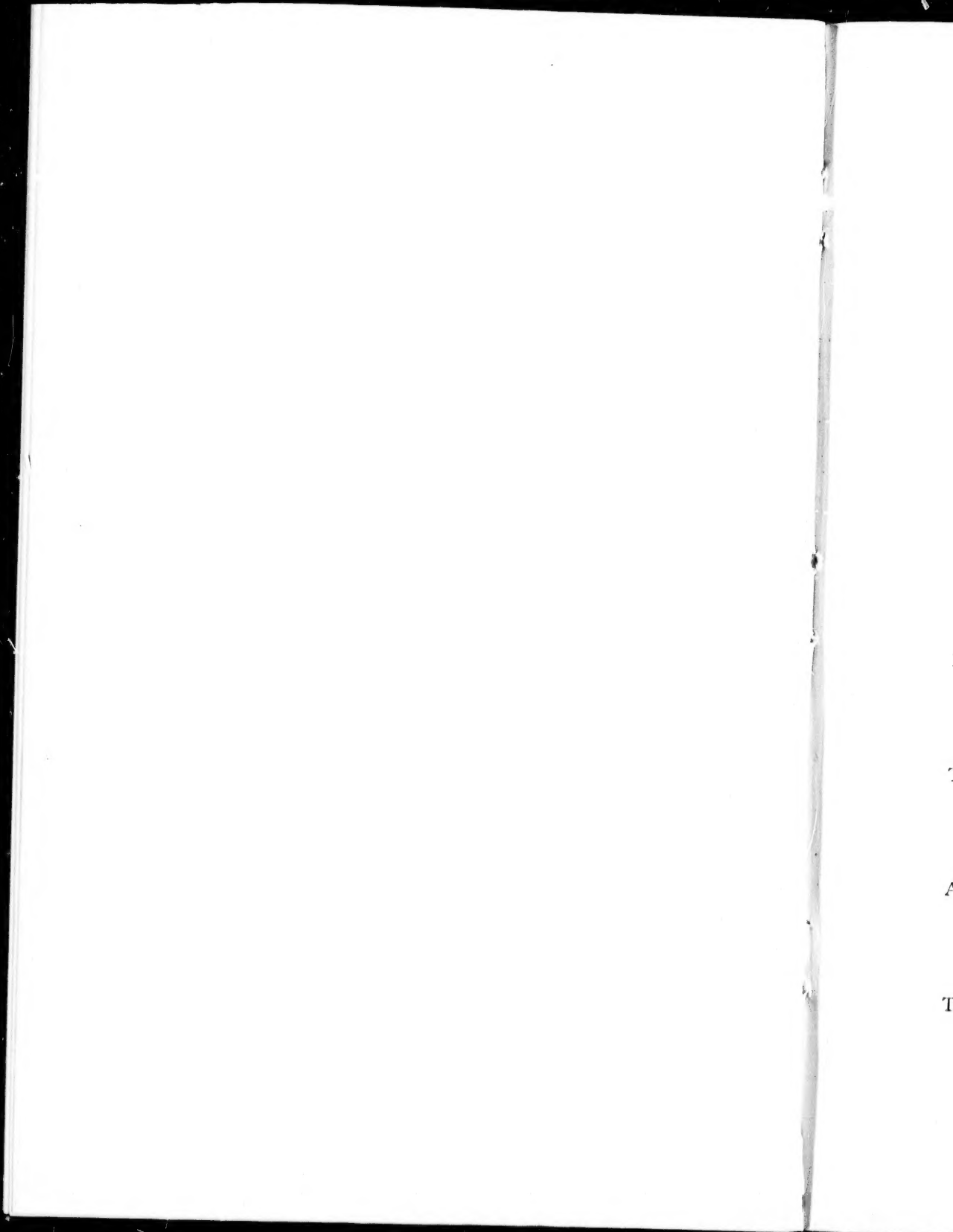
To

MRS. HARE

AT WHOSE SUGGESTION IT WAS WRITTEN

I DEDICATE THIS BOOK

46477



CONTENTS

I	
TOWARD EVENING	PAGE I
<i>St. Luke xxiv. 29.</i>	
II	
WHEN THE DOOR IS SHUT	34
<i>Rev. iii. 20.</i>	
III	
MIDNIGHT	55
<i>St. Matt. xxvi. 36.</i>	
IV	
THE FOURTH WATCH OF THE NIGHT	76
<i>St. Matt. xiv. 25.</i>	
V	
A GREAT WHILE BEFORE DAY	106
<i>St. Mark i. 35.</i>	
VI	
THE BREAKING OF THE DAY	129
<i>St. John viii. 12.</i>	



11

I

Toward Evening

ST. LUKE xxiv. 29

“Two of them as they walked and went into the country.” IT must have been grateful to these two disciples, after their three days in Jerusalem, to be on a country road again. They were people of simple life in a hamlet not far from the town. Their cottage would have its own field and trees, and a garden between it and the public way. Such surroundings make a great difference to a house; they give it seclusion and reserve, and affect favourably the life within. Those who live there are not at home in towns. Their plain lives conceal a dignity which a town offends; and, with their leisurely gait and speech, they in a crowd get driven and strained and are soon worn out. The very

2 THE EVENING AND THE MORNING

bend of a road and the open view and the softer spring of the foot are a relief to them after the constraint of a straight and narrow street ; and, after the noise, the sounds of the country alleviate and soothe. They feel as if the country were kind to them. They unbend to it. It allays and leads them gently on. Their nature gradually finds its own balance, and they are themselves again. Fine spirits attend in quiet places on those of a quiet heart, and arrange things there for highest ministry. So it was like music or sleep ; it was under influences which exalt and subdue ; it was to the spell which gives the soul its power of *ecstasy*, that, as the day grew late, these two Emmaus peasants walked and went into the country.

“From Jerusalem about
threescore
lurlongs.” The five miles they walked
that evening are the most
finely haunted in all the world.

There is not anywhere another reach of road so grey and strange. The way is full of spiritual enchantment ; every glade has a secret ; it is a place of vision. The two

disciples are still there—it is their high doom to be there always ; and the veiled Stranger is there too. Generation after generation, the saints go that way in the dusk, and the glimmering figures may be seen. Every saint has been there and seen them, and has followed until they paused at the gate and went into the house, and has waited until he saw the light brighten in the lattice and a glory come upon the doorposts and the wall, and then was aware when some one vanished out of sight. Thanks to the spiritual genius which has so cast these holy verses as to enshrine this imperishable mystery of such splendid meaning, there is for us on this plain road of ordinary furlongs a vision brighter than if we “climbed a thousand steps with pain.” Let us go even now by the way to Emmaus! Only we must tread softly and look with eyes not disobedient to a heavenly vision. The vision, though real, is elusive and evanescent, and if it tarry we must wait for it ; but, after it is past, we may find that its glory has

4 THE EVENING AND THE MORNING

fallen on and has hallowed the road that leads by the doors of our own house of life.

The way to Emmaus begins
"All these things which at Jerusalem; and both Jeru-
had happened." salem where it begins, and the
village home to which it leads, have their
own influence on the way between. Begin-
ning at Jerusalem, we may get into the
company of the two villagers as they leave
the town. They are evidently not at ease
in the street. They blunder along rather
stupidly, as if everybody was in their way,
getting separated and then getting together
again, and then holding the faster forward.
There is a sense of suppression in their faces,
as if there was much to say that they could
not say to one another there. They are
years older since they left home three days
ago; and the city has become so dreadful
that they are now all but fleeing from it.
They have seen death and funeral in the
city. Such a death! All the town was at
it; and the fury of the crowd grew to a
wild glee over it, so that they dressed the

man who was to die in mock clothes and crown, and made an awkward and unwilling man out of the country carry the cross in the procession; and they had cried out at him all the time he was dying. They never could forget it or get over it; for the man was more to them than any other friend they ever had. And then the funeral! It was so hurried and confused at the time, and now some said that he was alive, and some that his body had been stolen; and they did not know what to believe. So they are sorrow-stricken and almost horror-driven as they leave the gates; and, when clear of the place, they will have their own memories to meet and the fear of their own fears to face, and there will await them, without reprieve unto the end, the sense of their own irreparable loss. They are chased and driven like things that have been wounded and are still pursued; for they feel Jerusalem over them and behind them like a thing of terror. They were sorely in want of shepherding. Their agitated

6 THE EVENING AND THE MORNING

thoughts needed to be made to lie down, and their souls to be restored; and even now, though they know it not, the Shepherd of their souls is leading them to green pastures.

"The one of
them, whose
name was
Cleopas."

As we follow these friends we would fain know them by name. But the narrative here pleasantly puzzles us for a moment. There are "two of them," and we are told the name of only one. Perhaps this is but part of the gentle disguise which enveils the whole story like twilight; or it may be that the Holy Spirit conceals the name in order to detain us, until with the patience of love we woo it and win it. The Church here has lost a word, without which the whole tale is poorer. Yet, are not both names given in the one? is the second not implied in the first? and does there not at once come a peace over ourselves and a finer cadence into the verses, whenever we think of it as being Cleopas and his wife who are going home together to Emmaus? Some

old artists knew this, and said so ; but it has been forgotten, and few realise, until it has been put in, how the touch of this one thought is needed to give completeness and harmony to the allusive evening picture. Without this natural key-tone the narrative does not vibrate quite tunefully—a note is a-wanting in its music. For with the element and suggestion of home-life, fresh sweetness and sympathy are introduced into what is told. These two friends of Jesus represent a household ; they had a hearth, and made a home between them. We may call this a natural and most commonplace relation, in which the action and reaction of lives is of the simplest kind ; but it is human nature's primal relationship, and it has been sanctified by Jesus to a high service, whenever in it two are gathered together in His name. New significance thus attaches to the "two of them," when we see them as man and woman, bearing the same name and sharing the same home, and now sustaining each other under the same sorrow as they make

8 THE EVENING AND THE MORNING

for Emmaus. Theirs may have been a childless home, a home-circle of only two; but its chief interest is that it was one which Jesus, while He was yet alive, had visited and blessed, and was one of bereavement and grief now because He had there been more than a friend. We never know what sorrow really is until it makes itself an unbidden guest in our home—sitting at the fireside and the table with us, and sleeping and waking in the house; and when it overtakes us anywhere, what else can we do but take it home with us, and go in and shut the door and there become acquainted with our grief?

“They walk
and are sad.” The way to Emmaus was familiar to Cleopas and his wife; it was their way home. They had often walked it together in the twilight with the sense of exultation which home at that hour awakens. For toward evening the humblest human dwellings seem set under the grander custody of hill and tree and sky, and every peasant, when he makes

homewards then, knows a mild rapture as if the glory both of earth and sky belonged in some measure to his own cottage. To-night the way leads them just as before, and there is, as of old,

“the gleam—

The shadow—and the peace supreme.”

Nothing was changed, and yet everything is changed. “They walked and were sad.” It had often been joy to them to find themselves alone on that wayside ; but, though now there together, they are lonely. Theirs may be called a “dual loneliness,” so strong was the sense in each of one overmastering loss. They could not comfort one another ; neither of them had any comfort to give. Their common hopes, that had been gardened and trained to entwine around one dearest life, had been blighted of frost, and were now withering together. They talked of all that had happened, but, the more they said, the more confused they grew. They communed together and reasoned, trying every way to find some thought that might satisfy

10 THE EVENING AND THE MORNING

or pacify, only finding the more that "but to think is to be full of sorrow." So they drifted along without moorings or bearings, the night closing around and the dark prevailing. The little light that remained was more baffling than darkness. All the day before they had been reconciling themselves to the sad necessity of the cross and the grave; but now how could they quite abandon themselves to the thought of death when there was that rumour that He was alive? Say not that their eyes were holden! Things at present were worse than that. Their diviner nature was in a daze. They feared that the light of their soul had betrayed them. In such utter uncertainty, and with "the light that was in them" wavering and flickering, their eyes would neither fix nor focus. And yet there was light available to relieve any gloom either of their circumstances or in their soul. At evening time it might have been light, if they had only remembered. But, as so often is the case, they forgot, when it was most needed,

that "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet,
and light unto my path."

In the way of All our paths in life sooner
their steps. or later narrow and shade to
an Emmaus walk. Every pleasant way
grows sober and sad, the step growing heavy
where love once made it light, and com-
panionship becoming lonely through a larger
loss. The familiar place changes to what
is confusing, and a sense of abandonment
and desertion comes over us. While life
feels like one great blank, infinity all the
more seems to brood over us; and, like the
day lingering into the night, the life glimmers
in the death. These two walked that path for
our sakes. Their hearts were tense and tried,
and the day grew to night on that common
road, and all the scenery around them was
shifted and set to suggest the frontiers of
other worlds, in order that we thereby may
interpret our life's intensest experiences in
their largest meanings. The solitude of these
two souls was made by the echo of the feet
of the dead—not far off, and drawing nearer,

12 THE EVENING AND THE MORNING

but holding back till a way was prepared ;
t' confusion around them was the lifting of
the boundaries of life and fixing them farther
out ; and the restless affright of their heart
was only love and hope preparing for a
divine surprise. The far-off feet of the dead,
making towards us by the way of eternity,
are heard in the silence of every Emmaus
journey ; and it is our need of being led by
the light of farther and happier distances,
which necessitates the turning low, or even
the turning out to darkness, of the light of
our common day and of our earthly love.

"Jesus Himself A silent process was going
drew near and on in the hearts of Cleopas
went with and his wife as they walked
them." and talked along their path of shadow.
Love, hope and faith were working together
deep down in the sub-consciousness of their
soul. The only outward sign of the secret
turn which their hidden nature was taking
all the time, was given when they grew to-
gether spiritually eerie as they glided more

swiftly home. They had a presentiment of something; and it was like a sensation or a vision within themselves, when they were aware of a silent Presence by their side. They stood surprised, but not afraid, nor even much surprised, for *all* was so strange that night. And, as He was with them in the way, He was with them in another sense also, for He was in the recesses and gloom of their thoughts and feelings as truly as He was by their side. Yet, why a face so thin and white, and with such a lustre in His eyes? Why so silent-footed, as though He walked the waves? And why the cloak held always so close to His side?

“What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another?” A question always gives the suggestion of some one knocking to gain admission to an inner and secret chamber of our life. If the question is rude and sudden, we instinctively close and bar the door, and shut up our thoughts and feelings within ourselves more firmly. But a question when the tones are soft and the eyes alit with love will coax

secrets from almost any breast. The stranger was at the saddest room in the heart of the two disciples, seeking entrance with a voice of such sympathy that there was friendly parley at once. A second question, a gentle pressure—hardly a knock—opened the door of all their sorrow to Him in a moment. They flung the whole house of their grief open to Him, and He stepped into the midst of it with them. And what a comfort, in such a case, to be able merely to tell it all out—to find some one that is patient and tender enough to listen! They made no reserve. It took them both to tell it all; and, between them, it is all told. For in sorrow and loss there are elements that make a separate appeal to man and to woman; there is a something in grief distinct and peculiar to each, which only the one can appreciate and utter; and if all a sorrow is to be told, both man and woman must be heard. So hear both voices now in a double rehearsal of their one great grief—the woman's accentuating and heightening the sorrow of the

man. These were "the things" that made them so sad—"concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in word and deed before God and all the people, and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to be condemned to death, and have crucified Him." So said Cleopas, in sad enough recitative; then breaks in the woman's voice, with the intenser and agonising thought of it: "But we trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel." Again Cleopas takes up speech: "And beside all this, to-day is the third day since these things were done;" and some had been that morning to the grave, and found not His body, and seen angels who said He was alive. Then once more, beginning again with a "But," and giving the keener edge to the pain of it all, comes in the voice of the woman: "But Him they saw not!" That, to her, was the sorrow of the sorrow, the agony of the situation. How tender! how womanly! how emotionally her word completes the story of their loss and grief!

16 THE EVENING AND THE MORNING

“He talked with us by the way, and He opened to us the Scriptures.” It was a strange, sad tale for them to tell. But the tale was far longer and the truth of it far stranger than that. The stranger who listened had far more to say about it than they who spoke. It had an earlier beginning in sorrow, so as to lead to a happier ending in glory. This sorrow had been working in all history, and Scripture was all about it. The paths of Time had all converged to the cross of last Friday; and all the lines of the world's future were to begin and spread out from there. Jehovah had been leading the Man of Sorrows on His way to that cross from the very beginning of things; and things, having come to that, must now turn towards Eternity—the bars must be drawn and Death's outlet on life beyond must be opened. The long struggle with Death must be vindicated and relieved; and to the light of Scripture their half-sealed eyes began to open till they saw Him whom they loved in far larger relations and invested with a larger glory. So vivid and real and

majestic grew the figure of the Saviour in their eyes, that they forgot the pale man of Nazareth who used to sit at their fireside and whom they called their friend, and they saw Him coming down the ages with the keys of worlds invisible and entering death to unlock what lay beyond. So much lay unread in Moses and the Prophets, and so much unseen in Jesus, until they heard that priceless commentary on the Scriptures! but now their whole soul was expanding to the thought that things in the life and death of Jesus had been just as they ought to have been, and somewhere in glory were still as they ought to be.

“But their eyes were holden that they should not know Him.” Still the stranger was not known to them. Tones of voice; turns of thought; the gait and gesture; and, even more, old emotions stirred within them as if they walked in a dream, or as if memory were revealing and then enfolding something—all kept them bewildered. The stranger was doing all this. He knew what He did, and meant it all. It was He who was

18 THE EVENING AND THE MORNING

holding their eyes. He did not want them to know Him by sight, until they knew Him in their soul. He wanted to satisfy their heart before He satisfied their eye. But now they see with larger eyes all round the mystery of their sorrow and loss ; and even where things are still darkest, their holden eyes are conscious of the dawn. They now see clearly the paths of Time from the beginning all lit up by Scripture and leading plainly to Jerusalem and the cross on Calvary ; and out from and beyond that path of gloom and horror were issues in glory. They saw that now they themselves were walking but a few furlongs which lay in shadow between the bright and the brighter—the perfection of a plan and the larger perfection of fulfilment. And so they are all aglow with a larger hope, and their soul is heaving to the breath of eternities, and they are moving along the paths of highest human progress, for they are upon the path of God. Yet who or what is He who walks by their side ? for with Him there is the hiding of power.

The village
thither they
went."

We are sure that these two friends, to whom every rise and turn of the Emmaus road were familiar, felt ere the end as if they never had walked that way before. The high discourse of their companion had raised them to such levels of thought and emotion, that they seemed to be on His ground rather than on their own. They were so absorbed and swayed that the common wayside, dull and sad as they set out on it, was transfigured. They had got to the ridge of our dark world's life and were seeing across the night, and there was a glory on the dark path. But when they saw their own cottage in the hamlet under the hill, they were on their own ground again. They knew then where they were; and, as their comrade fell silent and the splendour faded, they came down to the plain thoughts of hospitality and the hearth. Their Teacher, whose words had had the power of other worlds, now won their pity. He looked along the road into the night with such far-away and homeless eyes; His

face was so wan and colourless ; He was so fragile and spent, and He somehow put them so in mind of Jesus, that at their door there was only one thing they could do. He had worked His way far into their heart ; they had become attached to Him ; and now they forgot their own grief in compassion for His. They must entertain this stranger, and give of their best to one who had given so much to them. She has been trying, all the way along, to get a clearer look of His face in the dimness, and can we help wondering if the deep heart-break of the woman *still* was, " But Him they saw not " ?

" Abide with us : for it is toward evening." If there be in sorrow an element so fine and subtle that only a woman's nature can feel and express it, there is a ministry in sorrow so correspondingly delicate that only woman can render it. God made man in His own image, and male and female created He them ; man and woman together share life's sorrow, and together more fully feel it, but they have each their own place

and power in completing the give-and-take of the emotion and the comfort when they transact about it with God. The woman at the garden gate had the supreme suggestion of that night of sorrow to make. It is the instinct of a woman's heart; we hear the voice of a woman in the words, "Abide with us, for it is toward evening." She had the key of the house; she kept the basket and the store; it was hers to spread the supper and set the chair, and if she had forgotten or failed in her part at the door, how sadly all the wonderful journey would have come to nothing! She, without knowing it, was preparing her own comfort when she prepared for the stranger's; and without that word of hers there would have been resurrection glory on the life of the individual—the Magdalene's and the other Mary's, the life of John and Peter and Thomas, and upon the life of the Church—both in the upper room and on the mountain, but none on the life of the home. The shadows in our saddened homes would never have been

alleviated by light from beyond the grave, if she, with her hand on the latch, had not said "Abide with us"; or if on any pretext they had let that Man that night go farther. It could not be, it would not be, that He should pass their door. The very necessity of His being within that door and by that hearth and at that supper table, for the sweetening and sanctifying of all home-life, made Him seem unwilling to go in—the more to teach us that if He is not constrained He *will* pass by! For delicate and difficult if it be to introduce Jesus into our own life, infinitely more so is it to bring Him into His true and rightful place in our homes. Jesus is at this point disappointed with His disciples almost every evening. They make no effort to take Him indoors with them. They allow Him to "go farther," and He goes with a sad heart. And let it not be forgotten that it is the woman who has always the first word, and the chief say, and the most to do in this great matter!

“And He went in to tarry with them.” They met as strangers, and are strangers still; and yet they are friends. Within all the mystery of their meeting, they were aware of a meaning which made parting impossible. Strange distances were between them and their companion, for their eyes were not satisfied, they were still holden; but He had made appeal to their deeper nature, and He held them by the heart. The eye of their soul was fascinated and fixed upon Him, and they felt that He might not only bring light into the darkness but add glory to the day. Their soul was full of hints and whispers, and their whole being trembled with excess of expectation and desire. How much they would have lost, and how much poorer the homes of human life would have been, if they had insisted even a little less on His going in! For, as He crossed the threshold of their door, a Presence entered potent to comfort ten thousand homes of sorrow, and in an instant that cottage was made the vestibule to royal

24 THE EVENING AND THE MORNING

rooms, because through it that night access to life's many mansions was to be opened.

"It came to
pass, as He
sat at meat
with them."

Much was said on the way,
but to us the rooms of the
house in Emmaus are silent.

We doubt if much was said within. The revelation of God grows ripe in silence. If He were silent, there would be a new spell in the silence of their guest, and they would be afraid to ask Him. There was a Power in the place, and it would be with thrills of inspiration that all the tasks of the house were gone about. It was some great thing they were doing—so great, they knew not what! And never was the Mary spirit more blent with Martha service than in those rooms that night. We daresay the fire that prepared the meal would seem to lift itself up and taper like an altar flame, and each dish as it was set on the white cloth of the table would gleam like a vessel in a sanctuary. For the veil around things sometimes grows very fine, and the difference between what is within and without indistinguishable; the

posts of the doors of our life are moved when the glory of the Lord is to come in and all things become instinct with a Presence. It was plain household work that was being done to and fro on that cottage floor, but Heaven could have afforded no holier service; homeliest duties then became "Holiness to the Lord," and when two cottagers there gave a wayfaring man the chief seat at their table, they were giving God His throne in their home.

The supreme moment came when He sat thus at the table with them—the moment for which all else that evening had only been preparation. He from the first had made the room the guest-chamber, so entirely did His presence fill and possess it; but when He took the bread and brake it, and raised His hands to bless it, then the Present Saviour was disclosed. Their eyes were opened, and they knew Him. The tokens were unmistakable. It might be that for one brief moment there flashed

"He was
known of
them in the
breaking of
the bread."

26 THE EVENING AND THE MORNING

on their outward eye the pierced hands, or they might see the side, and behold! it was as a Lamb that had been slain; or it might be the tone with which He said "Father"; or perhaps eye did not see nor ear hear, but the common meal in this lower room became so sacramental that the water became as wine and the bread as His own broken body, and the church was with them in the house as truly as in the upper room with the apostles. Then—most blessed and significant fact of all!—He vanished out of their sight, carrying away, along with His own resurrection life—a life that cannot die, all the holy attachments and hopes of human life out into the unseen and eternal, and thus giving a new centre to all life's lasting interests and altering the balance of life in favour of larger worlds.

“Did not our heart burn within us as He talked with us by the way?” This whole story is as silent and softly toned as a picture. Its arrest is laid upon our heart rather than on our eye

or ear. The facts are emblems; they conceal and reveal; they play upon the soul and leave it, with a sense of happy possibilities, more content. Let no one quarrel with, or question, what is written! It is the record of two souls and God. Its atmosphere is that of Hades—the border-land between earth and heaven; and there the spirit of man is touched to fine issues and sees and hears wondrously. Facts seem to grow to fantasy, and fantasy grows to fact again, the immortal nature within us sanctioning and verifying both. We within ourselves, and according to the depth of being at which we live, see and believe. The human spirit, because a partaker of the Divine nature, must either accept or create some such fine embodiment as this, of all its desire and dream. Every heart burns, in response and longing, to what these two disciples heard and saw. Human eyes, no matter how perplexed or how long holden, can, through patience and love, open and know Jesus in the house and by the way.

For it is Jesus Christ whom this confused world needs, and whom we need in the midst of our own confusion in it. Things will go on just as they have been—loss changing love to sorrow, the lights of life dimming to darkness, hopes and plans shattered into wreckage at our feet. The best thing, the only good thing possible, for us is to get a reference to and feel the influence of the unseen and eternal amidst it all. This is what Jesus does for our life; it is His contribution towards its enlargement and fulfilment. He introduces into the chaos of our reverses and griefs the power of a Divine pity and wisdom working towards a larger good, and He attaches all the sorrow to a plan of perfect love. He sets our life exactly in the same relation to a Father's wisdom and love, as He set His own when He was explaining it all on the way to Emmaus. He, to all intents and purposes, makes our Emmaus path a living way—the way of His own life. He says to us, "Ye now therefore have sorrow," when He explains to us our

life by His own. He comes to us by the Spirit in quiet, woody places, where there is shadow on our life; and He presses Himself on our notice with the record of His own sorrow plain upon Him, when common sorrow has sequestered friends; and He follows in the way with us making us feel all the while towards the explanation of things in God, and He tries to get asked into the house with us. It is the one thing that can be done, and He only can do it—to enlarge the scope of our love, to add rooms to this little house of life, to explain the shadow by the light of other worlds, to justify the broken part by the perfect whole, and so to fill all things with God that “there is no room for death.”

Many kinds of difficulty
“And He said
unto them,
What things?” shade our path whenever we
commune with our own soul,
and reason about the deeper meaning and
purpose of life. Intellectual difficulties arise.
The problem of pain, the inward struggle
of conscience and will and the outward of

good and evil, the crushing and quenching of individual lives in the effort to realise some larger result to the race—all these things continually vex and perplex. The crux of these difficulties in the last year of the nineteenth century lies precisely for us where it lay on the first day of the first century for these disciples of Emmaus—around the cross and the glory, the grave and the resurrection. When these questions so baffle us as to make life's paths dark, Christ is in the way with us, though we may not at first know Him. He is in these questions, and comes to us in them. In Himself He raises the whole question in its largest issues; and, if we turn away from the large, plain facts of the case, and raise microscopic dust and strain our eyes over subtleties and minutiae in the question, we shall only blind ourselves instead of getting light. The way and the truth of human life may now be accepted as things proved in the life of Jesus Christ. The broad and patent fact, indicated in Scripture, may now be accepted,

that "The Lamb of God" was "slain from before the foundation of the world"; for this principle is involved in the very frame and constitution of our nature, "He that loveth his life shall lose it." Christ in all the true life of the past is seen coming down the ages carrying the cross, and with His heart set on the glory that should follow. This explains the long sorrow of the Church "which is His body"; it justifies the ever-renewed struggle of humanity towards its ideal in a self-sacrifice of which the cross and crown of Jesus are the supreme expression and standard; and it warrants the assurance of all true life—all life that has Christ's life in it—being kept unto life eternal. These general difficulties are accentuated and intensified when our affections are involved. They close in upon and impede the beating of our heart, when, for instance, the loss of friends by death brings them home to us. Though we know that wrench and separation must come, yet love goes on assiduously weaving life's

interests in with those of other lives, like summer's fingers intertwining the leaf and branch of twin trees ; yes, and doing more vital work than that—grafting life upon life, so that they are no more twain, but one ! Then Death comes, and life seems torn and wronged. We try to live alone, but it is only life maimed and wounded. We go on in the old path of life, but we are bewildered and only stumble forward. We live in a kind of way, but the life which is needed to complete our own is away from us out of sight ; and, where once our other *self* seemed to be, there is left only aching and yearning and a sense of something far away. Our only solace, then, is in the presence and under the power of a larger Life, which can embrace our whole life with a larger love—taking in our life of loss and tears and reaching into life and love beyond the grave. When we thus walk an Emmaus path and are sad, Jesus Himself is near in the power of His resurrection life and in the comfort of His perfect sympathy. Our eyes,

glued with tears, may at first be holden that we shall not know Him ; but by degrees He will draw our sorrow so near to His own heart, that our saddened lives will feel as if they were under the shelter and keeping of His. And not only so ; but He will also make us feel that in the further recesses of His life He tenderly reserves the lives He cannot restore to us now ; and, while He postpones our hope, He enlarges it, and, on another horizon than that which the night darkened, turns the Shadow of Death into the morning. And, as to our own death ! Acquaintance with Jesus on Emmaus paths takes away much of the fear with which otherwise we should go out, in a darkness stranger than that of night and knowing not whither, from the doors of this house of life. Belated but not lost, we hope to see light in the windows, and the door not shut, when He draws near to say "Abide with Me ; for the day is far spent."

II

When the Door is Shut

REV. iii. 20

“I, John, was
in the isle
that is called
Patmos.”

WHEN John was in the isle
that is called Patmos for the
word of God and the testi-
mony of Jesus Christ, he had many visions
of his loved Lord and Master. It was not
to him as if Jesus was dead and buried, or
as if He was even far away. He was always
seeing Jesus and speaking to Him and
hearing Him speak; and it was upon one
of these occasions that John heard Jesus
say, “Behold, I stand at the door and
knock.” True type to all the ages is John
in this of the Christian exile—true type of
the prisoner of an eternal hope! Old and
forwandered and weary, forlorn of every
hope but the highest, bereft of every friend

but the best, another Simeon waiting for another consolation!

"Abide with
us: for it is
toward
evening."

These words, we dare say, summed up pretty well the thought of Jesus which haunted the mind of the old exile of Patmos. In his mind's eye John saw the Master wandering through the ages of time as in the days of His flesh He had wandered through Canaan—pacing still the weary rounds of daily life, wandering about alone and silently. The Apostle would remember many evenings when, as the light was dying away, Jesus stood outside cottage doors where friends dwelt, doors at which He knocked, and where He stood waiting until they were opened. He would think he saw Jesus still standing at the door, so vivid would be his impression of the Saviour standing in the solemn twilight there, listening after He had knocked and by-and-by knocking again; he might sometimes think he still heard the sound of it in the evening stillness. Then he would remember the door being opened,

36 THE EVENING AND THE MORNING

and so pleasantly the news being rung all through the house that it was Jesus who had come, and he would imagine that he saw once more all the pleasant economies of the fireside and the supper-table being gone about—Jesus having gone in to sup with His friends and they supping with Him. So this was the account of Himself which the Pilgrim Saviour seemed to give to John in the vision of his old age: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear My voice and open the door, I will come in to him and will sup with him, and he with Me."

"Man goeth forth unto his work and to his labour until the evening." The rule was for Jesus to work the works of Him that sent Him while it was day. The Son of Man went forth unto His work and to His labour until the evening, thus gathering up into His own experience all the toil and long unrest of the ages, for

"A great while ago the world began,
With hey, ho, the wind and the rain!"

But often when the day was done and night was come ; when the birds of the air were in their nests, and the cattle home from the fields, and the sheep in their fold far up the mountain side,—when the cottage doors were shut and there was not a tired peasant in all the land that had not his bed of rest and sweet sleep,—often then, we say, the Son of Man had not where to lay His head. Sometimes, as in the Samaritan village, He knocked at many doors ; He seems to have tried every door in the place and no one would take Him in. And we believe that, not seldom, like Jacob, He had to lie down in the open air all the night with only a stone for His pillow.

“Come in thou blessed of the Lord. Wherefore standest thou without?” And who was this who in our world had no home to go to, and who went late at night from door to door to see who would take Him in? He was a root out of a dry ground ; He had no form nor comeliness, and when He was seen there was no beauty that He should be desired. His

38 THE EVENING AND THE MORNING

visage was so marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men. He had worked, lad and youth, in a village among the hills ; but now He went about. He was as an alien to His mother's house, and was often an-hungered in the way and wearied with His journey ; His whole look as He passed to and fro was a silent entreaty, and He would go in wherever He was asked. Yet, how little the poverty and the way-soiled dress, the plain countenance, the carpenter-like look, the wayfaring appearance of this Man affected His words of love and His way as a friend to those who opened their doors and took Him in ! It was the travail of His soul which made so many astoned at Him ; but it was the nobleness of His thought and word, it was the divineness of this Man's love and message that made the doors He entered so glorious. To Him, a wearied man at the fireside, there was no difference between Time and Eternity or the human and the Divine ; He knew all about God and man, and life and death, and

sorrow and joy, and judgment and the hereafter ; He could give men the highest way of thinking and feeling and acting, for He had the secret of God and knew the divine way to live. Yes : it seemed to be only a tired traveller who had gone in and unstrapped his sandals and sat down at any plain table that might be set. But the keys of death and the invisible were hanging at His side. It was plainly that He spoke, as one speaking common things ; but kings might have shut their mouths at Him. The power of other worlds was upon Him ; and, while He talked, the breath as of an ampler life began to fill the house, and things became invested with Eternity ; and, as men listened, the kingdom of heaven opened to all believers. Wondrous power this of the Divine Teacher ! Wondrous power in us the divine learners !

“Think ! when our one soul understands
The great word which makes all things new,
When earth breaks up and Heaven expands,
How will the change strike me and you,
In the house not made with hands ?”

“Behold, I stand at the door and knock.” What Jesus did thus literally in the days of His flesh in Galilee long ago, He is now doing spiritually throughout all the world. He has no other refuge or rest in all the wide earth except our plain hearts. So He is still going about knocking at doors ; He is seeking to get into hearts and influence lives ; He is wanting to go in with His great revelation of things, and to be friends as if at hearth and table with poor unhappy sinners and ignorant misguided men. Think of it ! He does not strive nor cry, nor lift up nor cause His voice to be heard in the streets. He comes about our doors, when the day is far spent and the house is quiet, like a shy sensitive stranger. We can easily get Him to go away ; we need only to hide, as it were, our faces from Him. He is meekness itself ; He has dove's eyes within His locks. He is all but timid from very humbleness. One single word of ours will send Him away to another village, our neglect will tire Him out and He will go

away ; and it will all be done after a gentle knock and with softest footsteps ; and our great transaction with Him will be almost as silent as a vision or a dream. It is *the* great transaction, all the same ! God has made us very great, and He deals with us very sublimely. We have been made so great that we can keep God out of our life for ever, if we please. He gives us the opportunity of not letting Him in. He puts Himself in our power. He comes to us in Christ, and we may bid Him go away. Behold ! it is all good, all love, all life ; it is God Himself that we dispose of whenever we deal in thought or feeling with Jesus Christ. We are disposing of other worlds ; we are disposing of our own life. So serious was never so simple ; so much was never in so little ; so great was never brought so near ! " Behold, I stand at the door and knock."

"I sleep, but
my heart
waketh."

The Saviour's knock may not of itself be quite distinctive, and it may need to be interpreted by us. But so much is involved in

life since Jesus lived, that in this matter we need to be on the alert. No man now can get through life without having to ask and decide the question "What then shall I do with Jesus that is called Christ?" We may come upon Him still—resting by the well at noon, walking on the road when it is toward evening, or waiting in the garden at the dawn. We may expect and await His coming when we are apart and quiet in the cool of the day, at that hour which God has chosen to visit the earth, and when men have sometimes felt as if they could hear His thoughts as He walked in the garden; for this is the New Testament version of an old, old story of God, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock." We may be resting or reading our book, or looking at a picture or listening to the voice we love; but when a thought of good, an aspiration after purity, an instinct to pray or a sense of peace comes over us, we know not whence nor why,—these are tokens that Jesus is near and waiting by the lattice. These are now

the Spirit's way of testifying of Him. That diffused light of the Spirit which the darkness apprehended not, in which, before the day-star and the dawn, all the holy thought and aspiration of humanity existed as in a long twilight, is now concentrated in the risen Christ. From Him it was that all good desire and holy impulse proceeded from the beginning; but now these come so definitely and directly from Him to each individual soul, that the Spirit's work is to guide that impulse and desire back to Him for fulfilment and satisfaction. So these motions of the soul, its lifting of itself upwards to something higher, and its pressing of itself onwards to something better, plainly indicate Jesus as a strange knock, repeated and repeated in the twilight, tells us that some one stands at the door.

"And they did not receive Him." The Saviour's knock must be responded to by each of us.

We all know that Jesus is in the world still, a thousand times more truly than of old. All men speak with mingled

pathos and honour of this holy Pilgrim ; they name Him the greatest and the best, the noblest to be worshipped and the worthiest to be loved. The perfume of His name has made the summers sweeter, and His spirit of charity has softened the rigours of our winters. Men soothe their life with Christianity's spirit, and enrich their thought with its philosophy ; they adorn their character with its graces, and they satisfy their finer tastes with its ideals, as with fruits plucked in far Eastern gardens. Yet many are accepting Christianity who never accept Christ. They never allow Him to have a personal power in their life ; they never take Him into the house ; they never open the door. Some voices say in every breast, "Let Him come in !" others, "No ! we will not have this Man to rule over us" ; and, while they dispute behind the door, Jesus is left to stand outside—welcome to preach in the streets, praised in all the ways of the land, yet rejected of men in their daily life, left to the cold chances of

the night, and, for aught that they do for Him,

"known to all the stars,
And every wind that blows."

This whole matter is not
"Then came Jesus, the doors one to argue about. When
being shut." we speak about it, we do not
appeal to reason; we would rather ask to
be allowed to give people these words in
the love of them: "Behold, I stand at the
door and knock." They are simple words;
but they are not so simple as they seem.
They mean more than they say. They are
crossed by the lights and shadows of John's
sad old memory; and they are a sort of
picture in their delicate suggestion and
poetic allusiveness. But there is spiritual
emphasis in the words; they have both
edge and point. What! art thou only such
a stranger in the land of spiritual realities
that thou dost not know that this Man
cometh round by the way of thine heart
and knocketh for thee? Perhaps at the
heart of some of us He has knocked so

long and never got an answer that He is just thinking about going away and never knocking again. But not yet! He is there: He is there still. That was He you heard just now. That gentle pressure at your heart, that momentary inclination of your will, that was Christ at the door. Quietly He is standing, as if in weakness—only knocking. He has an almighty hand, and He has an all-righteous right to enter; and the frail door is only on an idle latch, and its plain deal wood is seamed, and its fibre eaten, with age. He might open it with His hand or force it with His arm. But no! Patiently He stands and lifts up His hand and only knocks—again and again, not over-loud—and He waits and listens between. His whole heart is within. Fain would He be inside. He is tired of the hill and the wood and the village street; and weary of the wind and the stars; but, oh! the pity of it, till some one rise and open the door, He is only *without*—a stranger, a solitary, a disappointed man, a rejected

Saviour. His head is filled with dew and His locks with the drops of the night. "The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head."

"Under-standest thou what thou readest?" Now let us speak plainly and (so to say) face to face; and let us understand one another.

The wish and work of Jesus Christ are the same to-day as they were at first. He wants to bring God into our hearts as a living and loving Power. He wishes to get us to remove all barriers behind which we might live only self-lives, or merely time-lives. He tries to get our hearts all as open to the play and power of immortality and its love, as the leaves and flowers of a summer's day are open to the summer sunlight and the wind. For this end it is that Jesus is so unweariedly moving about the earth, frequenting the church, haunting the doors of our homes, trying to do something personal for us, and be some-

thing personal to us, knocking and waiting, and waiting and knocking again at our unanswering hearts. For the great problem of life is to get our hearts so opened to Jesus Christ, and our lives, through His, so pervaded by the divinest motive and help, that God's love and word and will shall now have as full possession and power of us as will need to be the case at last if we are to be where His will is done and His love is the life. This is the life eternal—*thus* to know the living and true God, and Jesus Christ, whom He sent. We can have a present joy in, and a final hope of, salvation, only when Christ dwells in our hearts by faith; and we can know that He is so dwelling in our hearts only when we are giving up our sins, adding to our truer selves, speaking the truth with sincerer breath, acting in every least duty from diviner motives and loving all men with a less selfish love. We shall know it truly only when we are conscious of becoming daily liker Him who is at the heart of our hearts

and is the life of our lives, and when we not only think but know that there is less and less in our nature and being which either Death will betray or Eternity will rebuke.

"If any man
hear My voice
and open the
door, I will
come in to
him."

Can we all not speak for
one another as well as for
ourselves in this matter? and
must we not speak to our own
and one another's shame?

Have any of us given Jesus Christ that place in our hearts and that power in our lives which He has been seeking to have? Have we given Him the place which we know that He ought to have had? Did we ever open up to Him all the avenues and intricacies of our life so fully that He was at home with us and we quite at home with Him? and has He ever and since been as a familiar friend, coming back and back to see us, so that we never think of having anything going on in our life without having Him with us? He fain would keep fast and festival with us; He fain would come to the marriage and the funeral, and share our

sorrow or our joy: He fain would be on such terms with us that it made no difference when He did come, because we so knew Him and He so knew us. But, alas! we fear that it is more in pathos than in joy, that He still gives this old account of Himself, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock." And if we asked Him about His wounded hands or His bleeding feet or His sorest heart, He would answer, "Those with which I was wounded in the house of My friends." We must learn to welcome Christ at all hours and in all circumstances. To His friends He may sometimes need to come with stern, sharp knock, when there is forgetfulness and confusion and noise in the house, and when conscience starts at the sound; only let them rise and go to the door and bid Him in! He may come when we are ashamed to let Him see who sits in the seat in our hearts which once was His; but turn Him not away—open the door and let Him come in. We may have grown careless about His presence when the house

was full and when all was bright in our home, but let us look round the room and remember that sooner or later our house will be left unto us desolate, and let us not be like those of old who forgot to welcome Him until death and sorrow opened the door. Only let us learn to interpret the Saviour's call, and let us learn to respond to it immediately. Only let us open the door, no matter what disorder or shame may be within! Jesus coming in puts all things right and does all things well. If any man but open the door, "I will come in and will sup with him, and he with Me."

The whole air around us
 "It is the voice
 of my Beloved
 who knocketh."
 is tremulous with love. It is all sensitive and tender, in sympathy with the Divine compassion, quivering in a human voice and trembling in the touch of a human hand. God seeks us in Christ, and comes so near us, bringing life's best good and what will be joy for eternity with Him, that it is the same as if He and we stood

with only the door between us; and He so suggests to us the kindness of His motive and desire in coming, that it is as if He put His hand in by the hole of the door, and made the handles of the lock, which we are so unwilling to draw, to drop with sweet-smelling myrrh. God seeks our salvation, as Jesus thus seeks our acquaintance and friendship, in a wooing and winsome way. The Divine Love has recourse to attractive arts to gain the human soul. "Behold, He standeth behind our wall; He looketh in at the windows; He showeth Himself through the lattice." And then He puts a little pressure on our hearts, He brings it all to this little test, He knocks at the door to see if we will let Him come in. How serious to do that love dishonour, to thwart it and turn it away, to refuse to open to it! How terrible if that love is withdrawn, because, when it called, no one answered! For we must not think that there is not much implied in this quiet suggestion of hearth and home, and a garden

gate and a door, and "the still hour of thinking, feeling, loving." Alas! there will be no mistaking what it all means, when Eternity breaks through Time and all the arrears of life overshadow us like night, if then we are homeless and must call, "Lord, Lord, open to us." For then this great Love's only answer to us will be, "Verily, I say unto you, I never knew you."

"I will come again, and receive you unto Myself." We have now seen this blessed, weary Saviour of men.

We know Him; we all know Him. We have met Him on the road and in the street—the most tired pilgrim we ever saw. We have seen Him an-hungered and given Him no meat, and a stranger and we have not taken Him in. We perhaps are thinking how often we have neglected Him at our own door. Should this not be the language of our hearts now?—"Abide with us, for it is toward evening"; come in and break and bless our simple bread, and tarry with us, 'for the day is far spent'; nay, wilt Thou not often come

54 THE EVENING AND THE MORNING

to us when the door is shut, and come in to sup with us? 'Why shouldest Thou be as a wayfaring man who turns aside to tarry but a night?' Be often known to us in the breaking of the bread. Yea, even fulfil to us Thine own promise, 'I will come to him and make My abode with him.'" If thus in life we get to know Christ because we know and love His call, it will not startle when, in life's solemn twilight, as the light thickens in our eyes and all grows strange around us, there is a knocking at the door. As they are trying to say to us "The Master is come and calleth for thee," we shall say "The voice of my Beloved!" And there will be no more haste nor fear in our soul than in the breast of her, fluttered but not afraid, who hears past the window the step of him who has come to take her across the night to his own home.

III

Midnight

ST. MATT. xxvi. 36

“Thoughts from the agony of the night.”

THERE are two scenes depicted in Scripture, in which we are very impressively shown the human soul in solitary conflict with the powers of another world. The one is in the Old Testament and the other in the New. The solitary antagonist in the one case is Jacob ; in the other it is Jesus Christ. They are both midnight scenes, and in both instances the transaction was dark and mysterious like the hour. Jacob was left alone, and there wrestled with him a man until the breaking of the day ; Jesus was withdrawn from His disciples about a stone's cast when His agony came on. They were each alone with God in their hour of con-

flict: Jacob near the brook Jabbok, and Jesus near the Kidron. But the issue in the two cases was altogether different. It was a sinful life that made Jacob so unhappy, but it was a sinless death that troubled Jesus. It was arranging with his God about an evil past that made Jacob's night on Peniel so wildering; it was His preparing for a few last great steps to the grave that amazed our Saviour at the midnight.

"Over the brook Kidron, where was a garden." "Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane." All the spiritual secret of these words is in the circumstances of that night in which Jesus was betrayed. The place was not in itself so strange. It was a secluded place; a place of stillness and shadow; a place of retreat far among the trees, where olives and cedars made the shade, and the noise of a stream made the silence—

"A busy noise
By day, a quiet sound in silent night."

It was a spot of garden ground, a garden

enclosed and not far from the town, a cloister in the woods. Perhaps little children played in it all day, but when the day was done and all the children were asleep, the Saviour of the world went there to pray.

“Into the which He entered, and His disciples.” It was nothing strange or new to the disciples when Jesus went there with them: “Jesus oft-times resorted thither with His disciples.” It was not strange in Judas to seek Him there: “Judas also knew the place.” It was a favourite resort of Jesus—not wholly in the busy world nor quite beyond it; it was a kindly, soothing place—full of rest and peace; it was one of the Saviour’s haunts. We are permitted to think of, and we may picture to ourselves, Jesus with His disciples often in this place “where was a garden”—through the gate and under the trees—walking and talking together in the cool of the day, or, after a weary day, resting beneath the large white Syrian stars, alone.

What would seem strange
"Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder." this night was that Jesus guarded the place with His disciples. He posted them like sentries among the trees, and told them to watch. He left them all behind, and turning His steps alone to the quietest spot, and lifting His eyes to the lonely night, He rose and fell in agony and prayer. Think of this place called Gethsemane! Think of the cold moon, and the midnight, and the watchers under the trees! Imagine that you hear the babble of a brook, and breathe the fragrance of the cedars, and see the twisted olives and their twisted shadows with leaves trembling silently like sad grey hairs on old sad men! And realise the one solitary Man withdrawing again and again and again into the gloom of the wood, and there rising and falling as the sore contest went on, until He said no more and was calm. It was all peace and power when but a little before the Master prayed for His disciples; and why such weakness and conflict now, when

He has gone into the garden to pray for Himself?

"A place
called
Gethsemane."

We all in childhood have our own secret and sacred study of imagination; and somewhere within us, in a holy place of shaded memory, we have still our own simple child-picture of Gethsemane hung. And happy are we if, as we read the story of Christ in manhood, we can be pleased with the simple pictures of a childhood faith! Yet how much richer, how much more spiritually intense than in childhood we supposed, is the suggestion of the word Gethsemane! How large an interpretation it has in the Bible and in the Christian's consciousness! "A place called Gethsemane!" It may have been but a garden, a garden in the wood, a garden-orchard, the care of some cottage-husbandman! But that little spot of earth is more to us than all the garden planted eastward in Eden, where grew the trees of God. If we may not say that the tree of life grows there, we know at least that

60 THE EVENING AND THE MORNING

the leaves of its trees are for the healing of sore hearts. Out of the wood of its trees Jesus makes for His disciples the yoke which is easy, and the daily cross which, when they carry it after Him, is not a burden. In the midst of our hot and dusty world this garden stands, and Heaven itself showers it and fans it, and all the breath of human life is sweeter because it dispenses fragrance.

"My Beloved
is gone down
into His
garden."

We may gain some knowledge of what Gethsemane was to Jesus by simply reading what the Evangelists have written. They give a mere narrative of facts—a plain, unvarnished tale of what was said and seen and done in the garden near the midnight—and it is all told without commentary or emotion. And, when we thus read, the first thing which is impressed upon us is that Gethsemane was to our Saviour a place of *solitary prayer*. This is so obvious and well-known, that some may feel as if it might be taken for granted. There is here,

however, something to be intensely realised rather than lightly accepted. For think how Jesus betook Himself to the place this night! It was not calmly that He went, as if pleased because an hour and a place of prayer were near. It was not sweetly that He glided to His retreat, as He was used to do when in the evening, after the tossing of the day, His life there seemed to find a haven and be at rest. And who has not at such a time felt the spell of the trees with their leafy silence or their leafy speech?—a spiritual spell that soothes and an inspiration that helps us to pray, as if at that hour the wood were a shrine!

“Into the woods my Master went,
Clean forspent, forspent.
Into the woods my Master came,
Forspent with love and shame.
But the olives they were not blind to Him:
The little gray leaves were kind to Him:
The thorn-tree had a mind to Him
When into the woods He came.”

Such oftentimes had been the case before when Jesus came into His garden; but

62 THE EVENING AND THE MORNING

to-night there is another spirit in the man,
and there is another spirit in the wood.

“He began to be sore amazed and very heavy.” The overstrain of life had long been visible to the disciples in the patience and sadness of the Master; but they had never seen His sorrow break like this. There was no calm for Him in the garden to-night. He went to pray in haste, and fluttered as if with fear. His gait and His words were all unrest. He was sore amazed and troubled; and He turned round as He went and said, as if He might die too soon, “My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death.” There was something to say to His Father, which never yet had been said—something to do which had not yet been done; and thus, almost at the last moment, He threw himself upon impassioned prayer.

“And He was withdrawn from them about a stone’s cast.” Jesus knew the way He took to that solitary cell in the remotest garden; Nature had made it ready for her Maker’s sorrow that night. It was for Himself

alone, that He there might meet with God. All His paths that night led thither, and grew more solitary till He was there companionless: from the streets of Jerusalem to the quiet outside the town, from the dusty ways of the crowd to the silent-footed path in the wood where He walked with the disciples; thence He went on with only three of them into a more silent place, till from even them He was parted and moved swiftly to what seemed the loneliest nook in the great temple of nature, and what is still the loneliest nook in all the temple of sorrow. There Christ was alone with God. There He was face to face, and in prayer hand to hand, with the powers of another world. There, sorrowful, troubled, amazed, He prayed and pleaded with His Father, and it was long before He was calm.

And He was
a little longer
and then
He lay
and died.

But we may learn more of what Gethsemane was to Jesus from the influence which the place had upon the disciples

who were near while He prayed. Peter, James and John saw only from a distance, but they soon realised that Gethsemane was to the Master a place of *Pain*—of pain rising to an agony. It is sad enough to stand on the shore, and to see but a bit of wreck and cordage in the storm, when it is lifted up and cast down and tossed of wind and wave helplessly; but there, in that recess of the garden, the disciples saw Jesus struck by and at the mercy of a sea of sorrows, and they heard Him cry, as if in vain, for help. They looked on and they listened till they could bear it no longer. They saw Jesus being lifted up and thrown down again in His agony, and they heard His voice like cries of pain; and they tried to bear up and watch but an hour. But they were overcome; all was too sad and strange for any interference, and so they slept for sheer sorrow. Perhaps, like children, they cried one another to sleep. "The spirit indeed was willing, but the flesh was weak."

“And being in an agony, He prayed more earnestly.” We turn to them only more fully to learn of the Saviour. Think of Him there, going forward into that awful solitude and falling on His face to the ground; coming back and coming back to His disciples, only to return again the more alone; rising from the earth but to renew the prayer more earnestly and with sweat like blood! We dare to say that the dew in spring flowers never were spilled nor their fair lives crushed as they were on that solitary arena where the Son of Man rose and fell with God in that awful prayer at the midnight! What ailed that thin young frame, that it suffered so? It was the first of the final soul-travail, of the wounding for our transgressions and the bruising for our iniquities, to which the Father pressed His Son against the thrice-repeated cry, so hard to hear, “Father, if it be possible!” That was the chastisement of our peace. Stricken, smitten of God and afflicted, these writhings were the anguish of a human soul taking upon it the Divine

sorrow and the Divine salvation of a world's sin, compared with which the cross itself was peace. Was it strange, then, that the three disciples, who were but a stone's cast away, should have sorrowed themselves to sleep?

We learn, however, most of what Gethsemane was to Jesus from the change which there came over Himself. If it was a place of prayer and pain, it was also a place of *Peace*. He whose thoughts and feelings and will there so wrestled with the powers of a world unseen that His body was vexed and tormented in pain, grew subdued and calm, and became as willing as a lamb that is led to sacrifice. The change was deep and divine.

"Out of the woods my Master went,
And He was well content.
Out of the woods my Master came,
Content with death and shame.
When death and shame would woo Him last,
From under the trees they drew Him last,
'Twas on a tree they slew Him—last
When out of the woods He came."

He who went there in haste, and like to die

for sorrow, and who there, like a wounded thing, lifted up His voice in the heart of the wood with strong crying, came back quieted and calm and ready for any future. He who had protected Himself by sentinel disciples as if He feared a foe, and who from the midst of His agony even upbraided the slothful who slept, came forth of Gethsemane so prepared for every foe that, self-sustained in His great consciousness of power, He said to His comrades, "Sleep on now, and take your rest." And there was no more haste, nor surprise, nor complaint, until the end.

"The cup
which My
Father hath
given Me." A great victory was won in Gethsemane, and the peace came after that victory. He had the marks of the sore struggle upon Him; they did not allow Him to stoop down by the brook that ran by the way as they led Him bound out of the wood, or He might have washed away the sweat and blood from cheek and brow; but these tokens might well be there when the token of peace was in His soul. Jesus returned

from the garden—"with dyed garments" indeed, but "glorious in His apparel," and "travelling in the greatness of His strength." He has learned His Father's will, and He is now calm and strong; all His wish from the first was to learn it, and now that He knows it He will do it. "Not my will, but Thine," was His Gethsemane prayer; and now He must fulfil His own prayer—the Father's will He now must do. Now that very cup, which He so long and earnestly prayed to be removed, is His most sacred possession. He has it in His hands. He clings to it. He will not let it go. He *will* drink it. "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?"

Such was Christ's Geth-
 "And the disciples also followed Him." semane. When we pictured it in childhood we would doubtless take the scenery of some familiar place—the darkest corner in our own garden or the gloomiest nook in a neighbouring wood—and use that as the framework of our

fancy. Children always do so, and they are doing in this a more suggestive thing than they know. For Gethsemane comes in our own life, as truly as into Christ's. Every Christian *has* his Gethsemane. Gethsemane lies on the way to the kingdom where God's will is done perfectly. It is part of the royal road by which all the King's sons are led home. Christ saves none of His saints from Gethsemane, but He saves them with the fulness of His salvation in it. Yes; sooner or later each one of us has to leave the haunts of men, and at a cold midnight must be out alone and come to the place "where is a garden." There will be but one path for our feet when the experience comes to us, and it will lead to a gate, and we shall hear a voice among the trees calling us, and we shall need to go in.

"Go out into
the highways
and hedges,
and compel
them to
come in."

But often, often we go up to its gate swinging on its hinge, and we refuse to enter. And yet we *must* some time go in. Many good Christians

70 THE EVENING AND THE MORNING

make no progress just because they will not enter their Gethsemane. Many come to it long, slow years after their conversion, and they need to be driven into it at the last in haste and with fear. This is why God needs to lay sore chastenings one after another upon our families and friends. And some never come to it until the very end, and this is why so many saints have long and troubled deathbeds. They will not enter the garden to take the Gethsemane cup and speak the Gethsemane prayer; and Christ cannot take any of us to heaven until we have learned to say in quietest resignation, "Not my will, but Thine be done." The strife is still unfinished, the struggle of life is still to come with sweat and blood, the midnight agony of the heart is still to be borne, if we have not yielded our will in entire surrender to God in our own Gethsemane.

"Peace I leave with you; My peace I give unto you."	It is always a solitary experience to go into Geth- semane. We can enter it only
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alone. It is a lonely, far-withdrawn place, into which we have to go all by ourselves. It is a being alone with God for the settlement of life's greatest issues and the perfecting of life's divinest powers. And besides, it is often a secret experience to go into our Gethsemane. The nearest and dearest may be not a stone's cast from us, and yet they may not know when we take the cup at the hands of God. It is not necessarily a whirl of life-storm that carries us into that still garden as a final shelter and rest. Nor is it only when men fear death that they betake themselves there. A meek surrender to God's will may be made silently and may be kept long secret. It may be never told at all ; and yet many little things in daily life—young hair growing gray, a plain face smoothing into sweetness, a rough life softening and calming, any patience, contentment or peace—may be the tokens that we have taken the cup of resignation and have learned to love a Father's will.

"He shall see
 of the
 travail of His
 soul, and shall
 be satisfied."

Gethsemane, then, is not
 now the terrible experience
 which we have so often sup-
 posed. It is not, and never
 can be, to us what it was to Christ when He
 had to prepare Himself for the cross and
 the grave. He gives us of His own spirit
 and makes us partakers of His victory. It
 leads into the peace of living as much as
 into the peace of dying. It delivers us
 from all strife. It does not make the burden
 of life ; it carries it. It does not inflict the
 pain ; it cures it. It does not embitter life's
 daily cup ; it casts into it the sweetness of
 a Father's good pleasure. Never is our
 Saviour so satisfied as when He sees in us
 of the travail of His own soul in Gethsemane.
 Never is He so touchingly near as when His
 saints hear Him call to them to come in and
 try to walk His garden ; and, in its sorest
 hour and in its loneliest cloister,

"To the still wrestlings of the lonely heart
 He doth impart,
 The virtue of His midnight agony."

"Then saith
Jesus, Put up
thy sword into
the sheath."

This scene in Gethsemane is the divinest explanation of human sorrow and the divinest directory as to how it should be borne. There within the circle of that midnight experience Jesus included within His own sorrow all human sorrows from the beginning. There in that agony of heart-suffering He bore all that we can ever undergo. The world should have come very gently to Jesus Christ, cast as He was in human nature's gentlest mould; but no! every weapon in the armoury of pain was used against Him. He had to prepare not only for the betrayal, the insult, the scourging, the shame, the death, the grave; but also for the hiding from Him of the Father's face, for the shutting against Him of the doors of His Father's house, and the utter darkening in His eyes of its windows—whilst He stood outside in this cold world with the awful consciousness of being deserted, and had to cry in the misery of wonder "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken *Me*?"

None of that have we to bear—none of that *worst* need be ours; but some of the preliminaries and accompaniments of His cross-sorrows we may have to suffer with Him—the voice of the false accuser and the scorner, the obloquy of a harsh world and the jesting of unfeeling men, the pain of being misunderstood and misrepresented and forsaken of friends, the parting of our all before our eyes, the helpless pity of a mother's tears, or bodily pain intense and prolonged—all, or some, of these may be appointed to us by Christ in order that we may be glorified with Him. We have certainly, each of us to kneel in our own cell in the great temple of pain with Christ. And what is the divinest way to meet our pain? It is to be as Christ was—and as by His own Spirit He enables us still to be. It is to go as a lamb to the sacrifice. It is to walk up Moriah's hill to the altar hand in hand with a Father to whom we have said, with Gethsemane resignation, "Not my will, but Thine." Ah! it must come, it

must come! the bending of the will to God's, or the breaking of it if it will not bend! The letting of everything go, the falling helplessly into the hands of God, the looking up into His face and saying, "Thy will be done!" and then the peace unspeakable of knowing that He alone is all-sufficient for our soul and its joy! Then, come soon as it may, when at our late, last midnight, the forms of fear are sent to take us "whither we would not," we shall be calm and not make haste; we shall yield and in yielding overcome. We shall put up our sword into its sheath and say "The cup that my Father hath given me."

IV

The Fourth Watch of the Night

ST. MATT. xiv. 29

“Without faith it is impossible to please Him.” No virtue is spoken of in Scripture so constantly as Faith. As we read its pages, we are always hearing of it and coming in sight of it, and it is its influence which makes the air of the book so strong. Faith is to the Bible what the sea is to an island. We cannot be on the island without *feeling* the sea. It surrounds and invests it; it has inlets and openings for itself everywhere, and it makes the only paths that lead from it. Everything there has reference to the sea: the very grass of the place hears and obeys its great word. So in the Bible, which is the world's supreme book whether we call it man's or God's! We cannot turn

its leaves without catching the strong breath of Faith. The power of the Eternal impregnates the book, and it has "murmurs and scents" of the Infinite. The most superficial survey of Scripture shows us Faith as the background against which in clear relief the beauty and strength of human lives stand out, and as the only way to God and heaven in the mystery of far distances; and, on minuter search, we find that Faith, which seems so mobile and changeful, is the stable and constant condition of all true human life. It is found to be as strong as "the paved work of a sapphire stone" to give fixity and permanence to human character. In its own pure enamel it assort and holds all other virtues—each in its own place. It introduces into our nature a quality essential to its completeness and fulfilment. It diffuses a new element in the common air of human life. It supplies one thing that is needful. In its own sublime way the Bible declares this when it says that "without faith it is impossible to please"

78 THE EVENING AND THE MORNING

God, and it verifies this vast declaration by its own instances of what has been, and by its revelation of what is yet to be.

The nature of Faith as a power in the life of a man is such as to make apparent why the Bible, in dealing with the problem of human life, deals so largely with Faith. For Faith supplies a necessary ingredient in the process of making *men*, and has done this from the first. All lives of virtue, all the lives that have human beauty and strength in them, are toned and flavoured with Faith; they expand and are fulfilled in a constant reference and by a vital relation to things not seen. Faith feeds human lives at remote sources, as if opening to them storehouses of life in the far away. It appropriates, and enables us to assimilate, divine elements; and it draws into our being "blessings of heaven above" as well as "blessings of the deep that lieth under." It makes a human soul grow as a plant does when it is drawing something into its life both out of the far-

travelled sunshine and out of the soil. There is much in human life that is made to die; but there is something also there, which humanity by its noblest representatives has declared, and in its noblest epochs has felt, was not made or meant to die, and, of that, Faith is first the instinct and the eye, and then the silent root.

The power of Faith in man was affected in quite a wonderful way by Jesus Christ coming into the world. No faculty in us is so susceptible, as this fine spiritual one, of cultivation or neglect. As an eye develops to new power in fuller light, and will in new conditions fulfil more definite functions, so, since the Light of God came into the world in Christ, man's power of spiritual apprehension has been heightened. To say very little and yet at this point to say no more, Faith was so absolutely and entirely the rule of Christ's own human life that His rule of life has become the law of life to all who henceforth would live in the

Spirit. The Light in its intenser power seems to call aloud at the windows of the shut soul to awake and stir this rudimentary power; and in this sense Christ troubles the lives that neglect their spiritual relations, as if He stood near the door and they within were aware and said, "I sleep, but my heart waketh." A new spiritual genius is in the world since Jesus was here. His Spirit haunts wherever men dwell, and will not let them be. Men feel, as one of the conditions of merely living in a country where Christ's name is known, a sympathetic spiritual rhythm communicating itself from Christ's human soul to their own, and they are stimulated thereby to live in faith—not for the things that are seen, but for those that are unseen and eternal. It is, indeed, with the soul in its intenser mood when in touch with Christ, as it is when, with a pressure of will in each finger, a hand is passed along a slow or sleeping muscle to provoke it to new movement and fuller life. For merely to read the life of Jesus Christ,

or to know it and remember it, is to receive a deep, sympathetic, spiritual stimulus to a way of living like Christ's.

This being human experience, it was little wonder if Faith grew in the New Testament to be a quite definite and distinct thing from what it was in the Old. It was in the Old Testament, and Old Testament heroes and history were made by it, and yet in a sense the Old Testament knew it not. Christ Himself, too, was in the earlier Faith of Old Testament times as both its motive and object, and yet He there was only The Light shining in darkness. The Old Testament had not even a plain name for Faith. It was, to use a later illustration of more immediate appeal, as ether has all along been to us, a pervading and embracing condition, yet not known till later days so as to need a distinguishing name. The earliest noble lives of Scripture are those of the faithful ; Abel had Faith, and Enoch, and Noah ; but it was the New Testament

that interpreted all these lives and grouped them under their Divine heading as lives of Faith—lives that pleased God. And the New Testament takes also other men of stranger countenance and deed, such as Barak and Samson and Jephthah, and binds them with ourselves into one great spiritual brotherhood. We can scarcely feel ourselves of spiritual kin with them, but we dare not repudiate when God recognises; and the oath of God was on their heart and the seal of God is on their brow. The New Testament unites the saints of rudest Old Testament service in the same covenant of Faith with us; and mysteriously and mystically we and they are all one in Jesus Christ.

In the ages that now are
Faith means Faith in Jesus
Christ, or it means nothing at
all. Both Scripture and Reason seem to
indicate this conclusion. In His own life
and by His own work Jesus has occupied
and so possesses the whole region of the
spiritually unknown, into which Faith sent

the great pioneer spirits of Old Testament saints, that now He is the only way and end when men seek to know the Infinite. Even when men will not trust Jesus Christ as being God manifest in the flesh, they trust God with a larger Faith with and through Jesus. They feel that if they trust *with* Jesus, they are trusting all that men have found to be trustable, and trusting it on the highest warrant. To what have men ever dared to commit their life, their character, and their work? Has it been on the records of the world's past, or the promise of its future, that they rested their Faith? If they trusted these much, Jesus trusted them more. Have they trusted in humanity—its instincts and its powers? Never as Jesus did, who saw in all men the sons of God! Or have they trusted in God, the God of nature and of history—the God here or the God hereafter—the God in the light or the God in the thick cloud—the God in the peace or the God of the storm? Never so absolutely as Jesus Christ did. In Christ's character and life is the



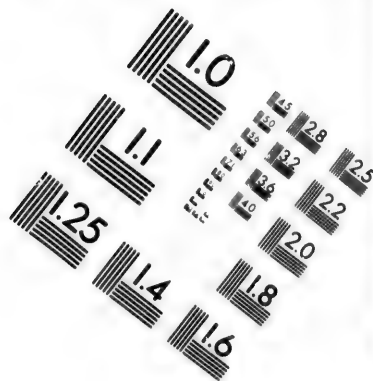
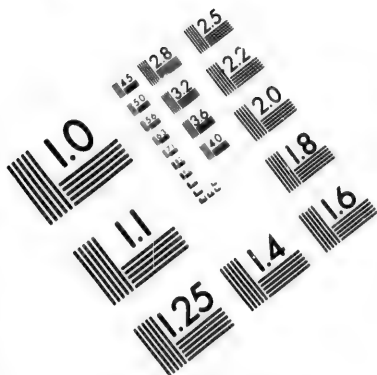
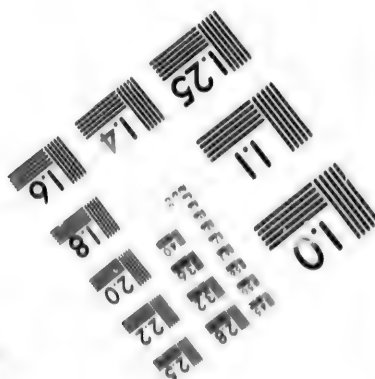
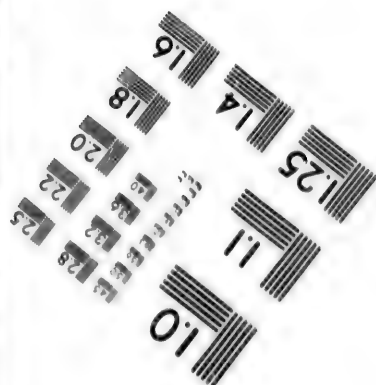
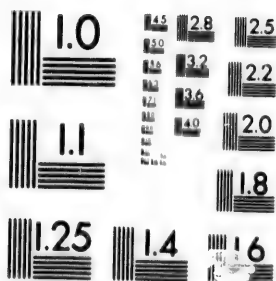


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10



hiding of all human power, because in Him is the concentration of it all to a silent, secret, constant union with the Divine and the Eternal. And yet this inspiration and steadying of our Faith with and through Jesus Christ are not what Scripture and experience seem to declare to be the vital element in the Faith which establishes the new relation between God and man in these later days of grace. True enough, the man with Faith has all history at his back and all the universe before him ; he is the only man who has true Faith in himself and humanity, and the only son who has Faith in his Father and his Home in the Eternal. But has not Faith to take an embracing and entwining turn around Jesus Christ Himself, ere it can thus rise with Him and enter and live in the unseen and the Divine? Faith identifies us for salvation with Jesus Christ. It turns to Him and finds in Himself in its most communicable and complete form all that it needed and sought in God. It is this Faith—a Faith which makes Jesus its object and draws

its larger life from His—which, the Bible teaches us to believe, has for its end the salvation of the human soul.

“He will speak peace unto His people and to His saints.” As we read this familiar story of the storm on the Lake of Galilee when Jesus walked the waters, we seem to be on Old Testament almost as much as on New Testament ground; or rather, let us say that there is here a beautiful uniting and completing of the Bible’s earlier and later teaching regarding Faith. The Old Testament virtue is here seen quite plainly achieving the almost impossible; and yet it comes to such definite shape and satisfaction as it fixes itself on Jesus Christ, that Old Testament history and law are transmuted into the Evangel of our salvation. It is a very rich and suggestive spiritual story that is told. The circumstances of the disciples, with their boat like to sink of wind and wave, hope being gone and fear unnerving further effort, are much the same as those that frequently closed

round Old Testament saints when in response to their desire and cry an unseen God delivered them ; and yet here we have the apparent God gliding down the storm and leaving the calm in the track of His footsteps, and drawing to Himself the direct and personal trust of the drifting sailors. The true writing of this story, however, is within ourselves ; it is all already traced by God's Spirit upon prepared tablets in the recesses of our soul, and when we read here we are only getting the key to a spiritual hieroglyphic, ever quivering amongst the possibilities and hopes and fears of our own life. No doubt the vast far voices of the Old Testament in one plain word here come very nigh us and speak to our heart ; but the outward omen and portent of this vision pass quickly through eye and ear, and we hear the voice of its revelation within ourselves. Its signs scintillate and flash amidst possible gloom and peril in our own life. The vision is our own daring hope for the night and the storm. We have a fore-

feeling stirred in us of life's extremities, when things will darken and grow lonely, when endeavour will not avail, when fears shall be on the wings of the wind and out-riders from the king of terrors shall challenge us on every side ; and, at the same time, we have the deeper assurance "Surely His salvation is nigh them that fear Him!" We have our own consciousness of what is meant by "the midst of the sea, tossed with waves," when the wind is contrary ; but we also dimly know One, though we see Him not, who has gone up into a mountain apart, and we feel that it means some great thing to us when the evening has come, that He is there alone. Somehow within this figurative drapery of fact and word the Holy Spirit of God has caused a great truth to reside, which the human soul whenever it apprehends it pronounces to be its own deepest, divinest and truest thought about itself.

We cannot read this story too quietly. Emphasis adds nothing to its effect. Touch the words,

as we might touch keys, ever so gently, and we shall have an answer to them far in our own being, and thence the Divine will reverberate and fill the house of life with tokens of larger harmonious meaning. The soul of man has infinity in it, and, when it is once stirred, no one can forecast its range or foretell what it may see and hear; its own breathless record of its experience between some evening and morning will be, "I saw eternity the other night." The great experiences of life arise out of simple beginnings. A common twilight, meek and grey, preceded this night of momentous, spiritual import on Gennesaret; and the boat, whose deck and mast were to shine in transfiguration on the driving tide ere the morning, was launched with only the ordinary interest that attaches to any boat pushed out from the shingle and taking the water at a lake's edge. The only sign was a very silent one; the signs of most note always are silent. Jesus saw it to be better that His disciples sail alone that evening;

He constrained them to get into the boat and cross the lake. But, then, it was an easy crossing, and it was quite calm, and it was not far; they could see the other side. Still it was true: "What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter." He separated Himself from them with a purpose, and pressed them out to meet the wind and the night alone. He had many a lesson for them to learn, and this once, for clearness' sake, it was to be an object-lesson, and on a grand scale. So, as if with Sinai's voices, for lessons in life's higher law, He spoke to them, far below on the plain of waters, from His hill of prayer apart, in cloud and storm. The night became unruly, and no small tempest lay upon them; their bearings were lost, and neither sail nor oar could serve them; they were so absolutely in the power of the storm that their only hope could come from One who had the storm in His hands; and their thoughts must have, in all the circumstances, pressed all and only in one direction—to the moun-

tain-top where Jesus was! The spiritual signs began to show through the wild scenery of the storm, and amidst the unrest the soul would show its Solar power. Then Jesus Himself appeared, parting the darkness and stilling the waters, calming their fears and opening up their souls to a larger hope, and He came into their boat, and the wind ceased.

Some word of reverence and
 "Of a truth Thou art the Son of God." awe rises to our lips as we
 read and realise what is thus

told us; and we must speak that word to Jesus only. Some great thing was done we hardly know what, on that lake and in that boat on the night of which we here read. We may in one sense be baffled by what we are told, and yet our soul is left thereby quieter and more content; we feel like children with a hard lesson—not that what is said is impossible, but that it is beyond us at present; and we vaguely anticipate that we "shall know hereafter." Among all the ordinary forces and through

the laws of storm and calm it would seem as if a new power with a special and higher purpose came in, so that quite unusual results took place; but we may surely do a better thing than merely amaze ourselves by contrasting what took place this once so wondrously with what happens in the customary course of things. We may more wisely regard this miracle as a revelation of what is really always taking place, more or less, when God adjusts His means to His ends, and of what we should see ever taking place if we saw "into the life of things"; and there may also be here a prophecy of that higher resource and power which the human shall wield when the will of God is made the law of life. On all the lower planes of thought our understanding is baffled when we would interpret a miracle such as this; but our higher reason, with all its attendant emotions, seems to be so far satisfied, that it assents to and sanctions what is here said to have so miraculously befallen in the case of these disciples; and if we project our

92 THE EVENING AND THE MORNING

thought and faith forward into future issues, when in the upturn and wreck of material life the human soul will be at stake, we dare to believe that, in comparison with the spiritual arrangements and Divine adjustments for the salvation of the soul in that extremity, these events on Gennesaret lake at the fourth watch of the night which were for the saving of the disciples from wreck may be as elementary and crude as a childish thing. As we lift this marvellous incident up into a light fuller of Divine love and wisdom, and as we make its chiefest reference to the larger future of life rather than its common present, and as we interpret all this as a prophecy and promise of God to the human soul, we shall hear in this Scripture a voice speaking to us comfortably. The gospel of salvation may stand disclosed before us in stately expression as we look upon One like unto the Son of Man descending amidst the solemn pageant of the night and the storm, and moving across the waters, mighty to save.

THE FOURTH WATCH OF THE NIGHT 93

In its larger aspects, this narrative seems to suggest the purpose and plan of the Divine grace which bringeth salvation; but very interesting suggestion is also given of the Faith which appropriates the blessing and peace which God has provided for us in Jesus Christ. The disciples all feared as they saw what appeared to be the spirit of the storm advancing on them; but their previously gained knowledge of Jesus, their *idea* of His great and gracious way with them, came to the rescue the moment they heard His voice, and they were no longer afraid. But Peter did some grand and characteristic work that night. There was some splendid play of Faith to significant results, between Him and the Master. His heart took fire the moment he saw Jesus thridding the night and the sea. All things became possible to him in an instant then and there, and he lashed at difficulties. He must dare and do something merely for closer loyalty and alliance to Jesus, and nothing would serve him but to be

treading the waves by His side. He felt that he must for sheer love's sake hazard everything in absolute devotion to his Lord, and at the high level of his ardour Jesus met him with His word "Come." That word of warrant transmuted by a spiritual alchemy the love into Faith; and Faith made an absolute venture, his whole being committed itself to higher laws than those which sense or reason recognise, when he made over the ship's side and took the footless waters towards Jesus. What a breathless experiment! How much was to be proved or falsified, when, under the spell and by the word of God in Christ, Saint "Peter walked on the water to go to Jesus!" What beautiful spiritual signalling that was between the soul of the disciple and his Master! and what fine spiritual attachment was made between them ere they drew together amidst the boisterous waves! and how absolute the safety of the shaggy fisherman when he committed himself to the call of the shining Saviour! Jesus was responsible for the Faith which He Himself had inspired

and sanctioned, and when it failed on Peter's side "immediately Jesus stretched forth His hand and caught him." If only we could realise this scene, with shut eyes and a silent heart, as a veritable spiritual transaction, what hope and strength would come into our life! What a Presence the Saviour would be to us, and what a reality His salvation! Is provision such as this indeed made by God in Jesus Christ for saving the soul in its night of affright when startled by sin—for steadying us when seas of adversity break around—and for keeping our life unto eternity when death seems to destroy? We accept this picturesque and memorable narrative as a declaration in act and confirming sign of the good tidings of the greater salvation, and as a vivid picture-lesson in the exercise and use of the Faith which saves to the uttermost.

"So great salvation . . . God also bearing witness both by signs and wonders." This notable and characteristic instance of faith in Jesus Christ is set for our instruction. We may take it as miracle or parable; for the

highest purpose it matters not which. To us it is miracle and parable in one; we know not which the more. This only we know most surely, that "Greater works than these shall ye do, because I go unto My Father." An awe-struck man on an Eastern lake in the dark of a stormy night put forth such a trust in Jesus Christ that it was to him as if the impossible happened. The storm of life was changed into peace, and the shadow of death into the morning. It was a night of transcendent spiritual experience to one rough sailor there, but on wider seas in darker nights men at their spiritual best ever since have been translating Peter's experience into their own. It is too late to recall the miracle of walking on the water to go to Jesus; its line has gone out into all the earth, and its word to the end of the world. The miracle does not consist so much in this having been done by Peter once of old, but in its having been done by thousands since. Faith is preached to us here from an old

THE FOURTH WATCH OF THE NIGHT 97

word in an old Book ; nay, the preacher is rather the bluff pilot of a Galilæan boat who, in emergency, threw himself on higher help than that of wind or oar, and got Jesus by the hand. Yet the word has been taken even from his mouth, so great is the company that now publish this salvation ; and the truth comes to us with more immediate power from those whom we have ourselves seen caught in the night of stranger gulfs than those of a sea, and who have walked on the waters. Men should think oftener of Faith as the power which serves human nature when all else has failed, and which does for us the one greatest thing when all lesser things have been done. Faith is the last relay and outpost of human life ; there God's reserves await man and become his allies, out of weakness to make him strong, and to change the press of the storm to peace. So Faith is an essential quantity in human life when lived at its best and fullest ; it harmonises and heightens all the other powers of man,

which must suffer if this one member suffers. The man of Faith does not fold his hands listlessly and say, "I trust"; he uses Faith wisely—not as though it were his only God-given faculty, but as one to be always kept in immediate readiness, that it may exalt and reinforce every other. The man of Faith should be the best sailor in the boat; he does not mistrust his senses, nor distrust his reason, nor undervalue his strength to row and his skill to steer; and he will be only more fearless and capable in all his effort, because he knows that when all else fails he can command a Divine deliverance. Yet it is wise "in a season of calm weather" to test at times our Faith, lest it should fail us in midnight stress, because it has been neglected in too long disuse or been eaten of silent decay. We should do as seamen do when, on summer days and in still water, they anticipate winter nights and seas of wreck, and bring out the rocket apparatus and its lines, lest anything there has rusted or rotted; and thus not only

THE FOURTH WATCH OF THE NIGHT 99

test it, but train their hands in its use, whilst the mighty deep seems—

“Even the gentlest of all gentle things.”

“And immediately Jesus stretched forth His hand and caught Him.” The very atmosphere and conditions of salvation are indicated by the words “God so loved the world”; and it is in and through this same fine medium that Faith has its fulfilment and play. The Divine Love is communicated in a personal way to men in Jesus Christ; and, working its way as if under the protection and encouragement of His personal love, Faith seems to lay hold of the truth and wisdom and strength of God for salvation. But, however intelligently we may think of it, a mystery must always invest the process by which we become, through Faith working in this heavenly medium, partakers of the Divine nature and possessed of the Divine life. So it is not without need that we are shown in Scripture one daring experiment illustrative of Faith working by love. One

instance of Faith, like this, does more to help us than all the reasoned explanation and argument on the subject. We feel that we can venture beyond even our intelligence when we see Peter, after his wild plunge into the storm, with his strong briny hand quietly sustained in the white shining hand of Jesus, and the Saviour's face looking into his, well pleased, as they draw together near the ship. We may have more intelligence in our Faith than Peter had; we should not have less assurance. His own experience that night gave him a fuller knowledge; and both those disciples in the boat with him, and the saints of western Christianity whom he started on their perilous voyage down the ages, have had since then a larger understanding of that Faith which he this once so wondrously used. It would have been a blind Faith to make an experiment so daring, if love had not had such wondrous instinct to interpret the Saviour's character, and such eyes to see and guide to its object. For it was Peter's love to Jesus which took

him in such desire towards Him, that he was willing even to die with Him among the waves. He did not know, he did not pause to ask, he did not care whether there was anything else to trust to out in that wild confusion of darkness and storm; but he could and did trust Jesus, and he walked on the water to go to Him.

“Lord, save me!” We know a larger and more wonderful Christ than Peter then did; we know Him with hands pierced in death for our salvation, and clothed on with resurrection power. We know Him as the revealer and interpreter of God and all His ways; and as the Son of Man occupying our right relation to God and to all the order and course of the universe of God. But we also know and trust the God who was with Christ and in Christ, and who is with and in ourselves, and around and in all events that befall us and all forces that assail us—ever and only Himself the Greatest Fact, only and ever Himself the Best towards whom all things are working, and in whom

they are working out for us some exceeding good. The highest law, the highest power, the highest life,—all things are with us and are ours, whenever we live and act as the sons of God. We feel indeed that we may trust and fear nothing. Yet who of us has so realised and can so believe this general truth as to feel that we could substitute it for, or could be content with less than, the grasp of the hand of Jesus Christ? For, in faith in Him, we do not so much realise our safety because we are allied with God and all His eternal powers around us, as because we feel that these are allied with us. Whatever of Infinite Wisdom and Eternal Power lie behind and are involved in Jesus Christ's spirit and life and work, their issue so far as we are concerned is narrowed to His stretching out a human hand and saying to us "Come." And in its real essence and result, our Faith is only our whole nature in entire satisfaction yielding to Him, gravitating towards Him in midnight tempest or noonday brightness,

and—regardless of possible or impossible—pressing forwards if only we may get near enough and simply feel our hand in His. I once walked the summer woods with a little child. While the path was open, and the sunshine fell among the trees and made all the place bright, she ran freely here and there on my either hand among the flowers that grew out of the soft grass of the wood, and her voice rang among the trees like a new voice of the spring. Then, as the path narrowed and the wood darkened to the shade of the solemn pines, and gloom and silence fell on our way, she drew to my side and grew quiet ; and she looked for assurance in my face, and was content when her little hand lightly touched mine. But when we came to the place of fear in that walk in the wood, where the voice of raging waters took possession of the place, and the path became only a ledge between the torrent and the crag, an almost breathless voice said to me, “I think that you had better take *my* hand here.” From this lesser, later

incident, and from the larger event of our text; from the child and from the man; from the Scottish wood and from the Galilæan sea, we may read in different letters the same parable, and learn from that parable the miracle of God's continual ways with man. The whole sphere of life is quivering with love and love's ministries. God is wherever love is, for God is Love. And wherever He is, we find miracle and parable together. Love is always changing into trust, and trust is always drawing fine and immediate help out of love, all through the realms of life. There is not a timid creature of the field but is swift and bold to defend and help the trustful brood which its love has reared; nor one bird whose love-call of encouragement tempts a youngling to trust its wings in the wide air, but is ready to dive underneath and bear up on its own wings the wings that falter or fail. So finely attached and interwoven are the golden chains of a love which reaches from God all through the universe of life. In sympathy,

THE FOURTH WATCH OF THE NIGHT 105

and for help or safety, love is linked and looks up to larger love everywhere in this quick creation—the bonds being stronger and more sensitive and immediate the higher we ascend. And at the highest, where the attachment is to heaven, and where the soul of man has nothing left to it except God, and where safety means salvation, the word of the Eternal Love is "Come," and that word is the word of Eternal Life.

V

A Great While before Day

ST. MARK i. 35

"The day is Thine,
the night also is Thine." WHEN we meet friends in the morning, we almost as a matter of course ask them how they have slept. We do so more especially when the preceding day has been a busy or exciting one, or if it was one of sorrow. We know that nothing will repair the weariness and relieve the heart as silence and sleep will ; and so we ask how the night passed with them. We ask both with fear and hope ; for sleep—

"Seldom visits sorrow, when it doth
It is a comforter."

It is therefore an interesting and suggestive fact that we are told in the Gospels not only how Jesus worked while it was day,

but also how He spent the evening and the night. We can follow Him as He "went to another village," or to "a place where was a garden," or "out unto Bethany with the twelve"; we can meet Him in the morning when He was an-hungered on the way to the city, or when He has been all night alone in prayer on the Mount of Olives. We thus in a measure know how the Saviour rested, as well as how He went forth unto His work and to His labour.

"The wind
bloweth as it
listeth, and
thou hearest
the sound
thereof."

A text like the one before us, with its tale of our Saviour at early morning, must be handled delicately. It is not one for analysis and argument; it must be waited on and gently entreated. All its fine spiritual suggestion will be lost if we once touch it roughly. Its influence is like that of a wandering wind of a summer night, laden with sweetness but wayward in its going. It will not be commanded or detained; it comes and goes; but not the

less it brings our heart good tidings and leaves us refreshed. We fain would feel the breath of the Spirit of God across these words enclosed in our text. It is a Spirit that here bloweth as it listeth ; it comes in wafts ; it wakes and sleeps. But we may at least say over these words : "Awake, O north wind, and come thou south ; blow upon my garden that the spices thereof may flow out !"

"And in the morning, rising up a great while before day." "In the morning." It was one of the world's common mornings ; one of that long series of the mornings which break silently, pityingly on the world's nights ; one particular morning among the thousands that have come and gone from the beginning ; a morning in Christ's short, intense life ; a Monday morning (may we call it ?) after one of our Saviour's Sabbaths. We should pay heed to every morning ; it is a spiritual world we are living in, but it is veiled, and we should be sensitive to the signs it gives. There is evening and morn-

ing—one day ; and each day is a portion of eternity marked off and enclosed. Audibly or visibly, the Eternal patrols round our little life evening and morning ; we may hear Him when the day cools and stills towards night, and—

“ Every morning far withdrawn,
God makes Himself an awful rose of dawn.”

A day could hardly have been busier than the one before the night, in the morning of which we here read that Jesus rose so early. The movement and energy of that day may even yet be felt in the chapter that tells of it, and the pressure of preceding days seems also to flow into it and make its narrative swift and strong. There is throb and speed in every verse. The feeling of “ *I must* work the works of Him that sent me ” makes the whole chapter vibrate. The peremptory call of Simon and Andrew, and almost at once the call of James and John also, both “ straightway ” obeyed ; Christ direct from the sea-shore, entering

the synagogue and teaching till the people wondered; His rebuke there of a resentful demoniac; the rapid, magnetic spread of the news about Him, so that a crowd was at the synagogue's door before He was out; His "forthwith"—as if with long swift steps—making for Peter's house, and there "immediately" healing the fever-struck mother-in-law; then at evening-time, after the sun was set and while the crowd stood round in the dark, His healing all the diseased as one by one they were brought to Him at the door, and Himself so possessed by His great spirit that not one of the demons was allowed to speak—such is the chapter's swift view, a view given in flashes, of the events of the day before! It had been a great day in the life of the Man who worked with God; a day of strong emotion and of long hours; a day when the virtue was going out of Him in strong currents of wide play; a day of many fatigues, after which He surely needed much rest!

A GREAT WHILE BEFORE DAY III

“By night on One of the melancholy sighs
my bed I which Scripture heaves over
sought Him human life is, “All things are
whom my full of labour”; and one of
soul loveth.”

the cries with which the Divine surprises us in His Book is, “And where is the place of My rest?” The task to be done in this creation and in time is so great that it wears out the human and wearies the Divine. But they are not the hard-worked men who labour strong-handed, calm-hearted until the evening: the night draws around them dream-fringed curtains of rest, and gives them deep sleep. Nor are they the hardest-worked who must compel a wearied brain to think and subdue to order the world's most unwilling facts. The sorest toil is the agony of the heart; and that has to be gone through and borne when the world's labour is still and other workers are silent; it is witnessed only by pitying ministrants who come from Heaven to strengthen, and its sweat is drops of blood. Yes, indeed! After spiritual toil Jesus

needed rest. Before the day was done this Servant of the Highest would earnestly desire the shadows of the evening to be stretched out ; and His jaded frame would crave for night and sleep. But the sorest strain of the long day had been on His heart, and He needed the most to restore His soul. All the day through Jesus had been altering the old unhappy balance between good and evil in the world ; He had, by Divine effort and pain, been dispossessing the powers of darkness from their ancient seats. That work was not done easily ; it involved flesh and spirit in fasting and prayer, and it demanded a strength that is made perfect in weakness. Was it strange if He was spent and wearied at nightfall ? Yet He prevented the dawning of the morning. He rose up *a great while* before day. His exhausted body was restless on its bed ; the spirit within would not let it be. He might sleep, but His heart was astir, and by night on His bed His soul was seeking His Father's face.

Very early in the morning His holy spirit quickened the mortal body, and in sympathy His heart and His flesh cried out for the living God. Therefore it was that He was up before the daybreak. Ere night's curtains were drawn, and while all the house slept, His head had left its pillow, and He was out of the house and along the village street and out of the town and away to a lonely oratory. This was the zeal that consumed the Saviour of the world; this was how *He* lived who gave to men the life eternal!

"He went out and departed into a solitary place." A solitude was His oratory; and the solitude was, if we read literally, a *desert* place. It was some spot on the heath or the wild; an unfrequented place where man had made no impress—where man even came not; a retreat in the wilderness, a nook in no-man's land, a cold cloister in a desolate temple. Only loneliest things would go there, so forsaken and fearful it was; and yet Jesus went there to pray. Some one

has said, "Time, where man comes not, what is it but Eternity"? And, when Jesus would be with God, He felt it good to be in solitary places and at solitary hours. He went, as if of course, to the seclusion of a garden, or alone to the mountain top, or apart to a desert place, when He wanted to be nearest God. Earth and time "where man came not" were congenial to Him when He would converse with His Father who was in heaven. While we cannot enter into His consciousness of expectancy and desire, as He rose before the dawn and parted the darkness before Him and sought His solitude in the waste, yet we cannot think except with a spiritual thrill of the thin young form, swift and silent, gliding along by the lake level and grey, and turning aside by field and wood, and taking the quiet lanes that lie above the sleeping village. He seems to be hurrying no-whither; bending thus forward and in haste after nothing; raising Himself to pause and look round, and again pressing on—

some spirit being strong within to take Him thus early to the moorland and the crag. Was it much wonder that He was misunderstood at home, and that some said "He is beside Himself"? Judged by ordinary standards, beside himself He was! The ordinary preponderating balance in favour of this world was in His case reversed, and He was swept and swayed by forces which bore Him athwart all the courses of common human life. But He is not there, disturbing the solitude of the morning and the moor, because some trouble is upon Him or some fancy beguiles Him. He knows why and whither He is going. He has an aim and a purpose; and it is the grandeur of His purpose which makes His life so different from all others, and is now carrying Him as if adrift up into the mist on the morning hill. He comes to the place which He sought; and there under the latest stars and with the dripping Eastern night around Him, kneeling on the dewy grass or the cold damp stone, *He prayed.*

116 THE EVENING AND THE MORNING

“My voice Jesus there prayed! That
shalt thou was all He had gone there to
hear in the do; and, how great a thing
morning, that was for Him to do, who
O Lord,”

of us may say? Who knows how refreshing it was to the Saviour Himself to be thus alone in the chill dark morning, while all the land was asleep, bracing His soul in this spiritual exercise and girding Himself with Divine strength for the day? To outward seeming He might appear but a reed shaken of the wind, as in that forlorn place at that untimely hour, with clasped hands and brow upraised, He swayed in silent prayer, while the wind of the night took His hair and the silence soothed Him. But that was not all nor most. There was a soul within that man, the breath of whose life was Eternity; and that solitude was as eternity because God was there. The airs of Heaven were beating around Him and swaying His soul; and as His spirit caught these breaths from Eternity all the chords of His being trembled and murmured

in them. He was there receiving restoration more convenient and refreshment more wonderful than if He had given His exhausted body long rest in morning sleep; He was replenishing His spent strength at its deepest source; He was enriching His life with its divinest Power. He was there getting Himself into line with the true order and course of things; He was hearing those words of which He afterwards was able to say, "I have given unto them the words which Thou gavest me"; and He was having His hand so overlaid and guided and strengthened by the hand of God, that He would be able to say all the day through, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." This was why, "in the morning, rising up a great while before day, Jesus departed and went out into a solitary place, and there prayed."

<p>"Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say?"</p>	<p>In all this haunting of the solitude and in its hours of strong prayer, Jesus Christ was</p>
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something more than our Example. There were elements of agitation and divine unrest ; there was a baptising of Him with the Spirit as with fire ; there were tokens of His being straitened, till something was accomplished. He was doing that for us and for the world which none had done before, and which no one needs ever to do again. That morning hour in a desolate place apart above Capernaum was part of a great spiritual process. These early vigils, those nights of strong crying and tears, the daily cross of the way and the cruel cross at the end, were the bringing in of eternal salvation to the world. Since Jesus did all that, life has not been the same to men as it was before ; things have all been different and better. Jesus was, all that while He was on earth, pushing wide open the gates of life for mankind, unfolding larger rooms in life's great house ; and wide open now they all stand, and no man can ever shut them. We do not now need, as He did, to struggle and be in the combat late and early, so as to reverse and change

all the currents of eternity and time. Things are other and different from what they once were; the world is saved, and the tide of human life now sets toward eternity and heaven. We need only to enter where He opened and to follow where He led, making ourselves heirs of what He purchased and finding our freedom in His victory. One petition to the Father in His name, trembling upon the timidest human lip, or one yearning turn of a human heart, moving heavenwards by His spirit, has all the virtue and power of all His prayers and agonies and tears. We who believe in Christ are partakers of His life; we are of kin with Christ, and the Father Himself loveth us because we have loved Him; and whatsoever we ask the Father in His name, He will give it.

But Jesus Christ in all this
 "Christ . . .
 leaving us an
 example, that
 ye should
 follow His
 steps,"
 is not less our Example, be-
 cause as the world's Saviour
 He is in His own prayers much
 more than an Example. Prayer
 is not a subject for discussion and argument.

Any child can put difficulties about prayer before even wise men which they cannot meet, and ask questions on the subject which they cannot answer. But are we at any turn in life to be asked still, and do nothing, till we understand all mysteries and have all knowledge? Prayer is not a thing to be discussed but a thing to be done; it is not to be proved in argument but by experience. We all know these difficulties that men speak about, but we have to pray in spite of them—the spirit of prayer asserting itself against and finding its way through them all, under the force and pressure of a great law of our being, like the waters of the spring rising only purer because being raised by nature's law against and through the hindrance of rock and soil. Or we may look at the matter in this other light: a child has many requests to make of a father; they are inseparable from child life, when it is lived under the influence of a life larger and wiser than its own. A child's life is necessarily one of asking, and the more it is loved and loves,

the more it will ask ; and do not the prattling requests of his child, prompted by a deep divine impulse in its breast, rise all the dearer and stronger to the father's heart because they are continually rising through mispronunciation and broken thoughts, and even through ignorance and folly? We often pray very badly ; we may be conscious of doing so, and yet we must pray. The greatest and best have prayed, and, as they have believed, not in vain. The unlikeliest have prayed ; everybody prays at a time. And not one of us can read of and realise Jesus praying alone that dark morning on the moor, and not feel that we ought to pray too—pray more often, pray more truly, pray with His spirit.

“When He
ceased, one of
His disciples
said unto Him,
Lord, teach us
to pray.”

We would plead with people,
that each one for himself in
his own measure and method
should copy Christ's example
in prayer. Each one should
find for himself a solitary place, and give
his soul a quiet hour there—a quiet hour of

spiritual solitude. Quietism is no delusion or dream, and it asks neither a cloistered cell nor a lonely wild; only let each one somewhere, anywhere, permit and train his soul to come forth and have for a little its own way in seeking, and in speaking with, its God. Let the body be bent and submissive and patient, let the mind be subdued and motionless, let the place be hushed and secluded; let it all be done regularly and often, because it was done by Jesus, and not only shall we get to know our own soul, but our soul—so shy and sensitive—will get to know God. Our spirits get into habits, just as our bodies do. What is association but a habit of the mind? And our soul is wonderfully at the mercy of little things, either for hindrance or help. Jesus had a habit of going to the solitary place to pray. The disciples knew His way, and they went to seek Him in solitary places, as if He “oft-times resorted thither.” It is wise and pleasant to get our soul into holy habits, to coax and humour it, allowing it to have

associations with one particular room in the house and one particular chair at which we kneel and one particular Bible and one particular hour when we read and pray. This is better than mere resolution or effort; and in the morning these spiritual arrangements and adjustments might prove to our soul earliest communion—the tasting of the bread of life before the bread which perisheth, the feeding of the soul before the body, the casting every morning of the spirit and power of Christ's life into the spring of our own life to influence its flowing all the day. Are they blessed who in faith hurry in the shivering morning along our streets to cathedral silence to bend their pilgrim knees on the cold stones, and receive of Christ in the holy sacrament? Yes! Blessed are they who do that for Christ's and their own souls' sake; but as blessed we all may be if we rouse ourselves, and, preventing the dawning of the day, find out a solitary place for our own soul and in His Spirit there pray. Thence, as from a holy shrine where we have drunk

the chalice of a new covenant, each one of us, pure within and in shining armour, may enter the world as a very knight of God.

“Take heed
that ye despise
not one of
these little
ones.”

This habit of spiritual solitude in the life of Jesus suggests some reflections, the mere mention of which may remind us of delicate duties. The most strangely sensitive and holy thing in all this world is a little child's soul when its first feeling of God is on it. Some of us would give all the years, and all that the years have brought us, for one hour's feeling *towards* God and *of* God, such as we knew in childhood. What are we doing to help little children to understand these visitings of their soul by God? What are we doing to teach them to pray? This age does more than any other ever did for the training of mind and body: is it not doing less than any other for the education of the soul? Our only principle and rule in this delicate duty must be the spirit and practice of Jesus Christ. More is taught us as to this than here appears on

the surface. The hardest task in spiritual life is to show one's deepest emotions and speak one's diviner experiences at home. The shyest of all spirits is the child's, when God has been with it. Jesus with His mother we can in a measure realise; but when sons and daughters were born into the holy family, we lose our vision of Him in home life. But we remember that He said, in a tone that suggests experience, "A man's foes"—his greatest difficulty—"shall be those of his own household." May this spiritual solitariness, this habit of early prayer in desert places alone, not have been a survival of his sinless boyhood? How likely it seems that the Holy Child, visited in the night season by the Spirit of His Father, and His home, and awakening among others in the house with only a vanishing vision of holier places and diviner things, should have accustomed Himself to rise early when no one wist His business, and, anticipating the dawning of the day, to go out to commune with His Father in solitude!

He at least knew these morning monitions which God gives the soul, and He sought to obey them with entire willingness. And we ask people to believe that these high instincts do move children in the house at home; they are aware of God, and often know not what to do. Whoever would deal wisely with children must remember and realise that they are God-visited. Childhood *is* God-haunted; it is full of hints and whispers from the Divine. And at no point must the touch of the teacher be more delicate or his word more loving than when he would educate a child to interpret the signs of God, and to know His voice. And should we be in perplexity in this whole matter, this incident in Christ's life may, through the suggestion of the Spirit, be made unto us wisdom.

"I myself will
awake early." We may be assured that the grey dawn is better for prayer than the late evening, and the fresh spirit of the morning than the flaccid mind when the day is done. To our duty in this great

matter God has called us by the example of His Son : He calls us in Christ to seek Him early every morning. Let us hear His voice in this, and not refuse His call ! Let us not be found covering ourselves out of His sight in any sleepy thicket of indolence and sloth ; and let us be afraid to hurry away into the crowd of daily life, where we may lose our sight of Him, or where, as we might deem, we should be concealed from His eye ! Let us rather with our whole heart seek Him early every day. Never let the body prevail over the spirit, but if need be let dull sleep be shaken off, and let the soul have its dues and the heart its time with God. Rather than miss this, let us rise up a great while before day that we may have an hour consecrated and devoted to God. Then, while the voices of the world are still silent, while the calm of our soul is unruffled, while we are still safe from the winds and currents of the day, let us see whether airs as of a serener and sweeter place will not breathe upon us, and

whether we shall not know our immortality stirring within us, and whether some new power of our soul will not rise and press up toward its level and source in God. And thereafter let us see whether we are not more calm and satisfied, and whether we are not in all our best nature at peace, and abler to carry thence a diviner righteousness and a truer holiness into all the life of the day.

VI

The Breaking of the Day

ST. JOHN viii. 12

THESE familiar words have an interesting setting. The circumstances in which they were spoken add to their effect and beauty. They were spoken in the morning after Jesus had been all night on the Mount of Olives. The day before had been one of controversy again and again renewed; and at night, silenced if not convinced, every man had gone to his own house. But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. He was jaded and weary; but He knew the groves not far off,

“Whose ministry it is
To interpose the covert of their shades
Even as a sleep, between the heart of man
And outward troubles,”

and He at nightfall withdrew from the town and spent the night in the wood on the hill. He was there from dark to dawn alone. The lamps in that temple of God were out, but the hours there were precious. Even the darkness, opening and deepening as He passed and re-passed under the trees, would work its own work among His thoughts; and the earliest stir of the leaves to the first intention of the dawn would also speak to His soul. But the sunrise had been His great experience on the hill. He had seen "the day break and the shadows flee away," and it had been to Him like an inspiration. He had fasted and prayed all the night under the arched shadows in the wood; but in the morning He had meat to eat. At dawn of day angels came and ministered unto Him and He was strong again; and in an ecstasy of new spiritual power He swept down to Jerusalem with this parable on His lips, "I am the Light of the world."

“Therefore I speak in parables, because they seeing see not.” We are all tempted, when we read of Jesus Christ, to be so much impressed with His power of miracle that we forget the exhaustless treasures of thought, in which was the hiding of His highest power. He Himself never for a moment doubted that His thought would break up the error and supersede the partial truth of every other system. He had absolute reliance on His words; and He set His sayings above His miracles. John, who was especially the interpreter of Jesus, gives the keynotes of the Master's teaching in three words—Light, Love, Life. With these words He separated Himself as a Teacher from all alliance, and made a new start in human history alone. We have a few quite quiet words in this saying of Christ, “I am the Light of the world”; and yet they are greater than they seem. They are veiled words—a gentle reference to the world of nature, half concealing the majestic power of the purpose which they express. It was

the task of a God which He here shows that He had in hand ; it was neither less nor more than to transform the first creation and make of it a new and better. The whole area of creative work in the beginning is swept by this daring word. The strong thought had kindled in His soul when His Father spoke to Him in the daybreak ; and when early in the morning He taught this in the temple He at once exhausted and superseded all His previous teaching about Himself. It was a new-born truth which in a moment made the thought of Scribe and Pharisee old ; and it was learned in no school, but was God's own thought given to Jesus in the depths of His own consciousness, where He and His Father were one, and it found outlet and took shape in words fresh coined that morning by the strong, immediate impact of His soul with one of God's constant tokens in nature. This was teaching truth by parable in a transcendent way. The spiritual was shown through "that which is natural." The light of a

new day was seen advancing in triumph after victory over the night, and seemed to strew the world of sin and wrong with these words—"Behold, I make all things new." On Christ's lips every great word became necessarily a word about Himself, because the final and most essential reference of all truth is to Him. Others had to go outside of themselves to find the truth, but Jesus had not. He *was* the Truth, and when He made the morning sun witness and attest this declaration about Himself, "I am the Light of the world," He was saying only what every dawn and sunrise had from the beginning been yearning to say and could not, and was giving the truth which (though seeing these signs so long) men had not perceived.

"Men loved
darkness
rather than
light, because
their deeds
were evil."

There is spiritual suggestion in the continual struggle, renewed with the opening and closing of every day, between the light and the darkness. As if rising from defeat, every morning seems to wrestle for its life. That struggle, at its

intensest power, had the keenness of a personal combat before Jesus left the world. It was a royal contest, for He wrestled against principalities and powers ; He closed at the last with the rulers of the darkness of this world. But Jesus here only gently indicates His mission into the world when He associates it with that of light. Darkness is on the side of sin, and favours it ; but light rebukes it. Evil broods over the earth with the wings of every night. Sin is hatched, and it lives, in the dark. But light will not suffer sin to live ; even street lamps disturb sinners and lessen crime. And Jesus, allying Himself with the light, might seem to suggest that sin might be charmed away by what was so winsome and pure. But intense emotion underlay His words. If He wept over a ruined city, had He looked without tears on a ruined world, lying black as night before His eyes, doleful and confused and perilous ? He realised, as if with a shudder, the power in men to become sons of darkness, when,

by putting out one by one the lights of their soul and shutting off the light of God, they not only made their life dark, but so changed their nature that darkness became congenial, and they loved darkness rather than light. Over some lives He sighed aloud, "How great is that darkness!" as if realising how nearly hopeless a man was when the light that was in him became darkness. Human lives showed on every hand that dismal and malign influences swayed them; and even at its best the life of the world was as different from what it should have been, as the heavy drooping night is from the sunshine and song of the morning. It was all life under a cloud; much of it was like life in a cavern. The best in men, the divine and eternal in their being and life, was either not quickened at all or thwarted and wronged in its growth. The darkness was thick, so that even good lives had an effect only like light—not apprehended but baffled. And Jesus would have His sad hours at times about His own

human life and its fate in a world so dark ; probably He had some very sad ones only last night, when, after a day of such contradiction, He went to the hill and the wood.

"I am the Light of the world." Yet now Jesus was able, in the glow of His newly-stirred consciousness with God, to stand forth, as when a sun shineth in his strength, and proclaim : "I am the Light of the world." Then in order to bring this high and splendid truth nearer to men for their help, He parts its rays as if in the atmosphere of His humanity, and speaking at the level of men in sympathy and for their individual comfort, He says : "He that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness." This is "kindly light." This is the light of God diffusing itself through the human ; it is light from Heaven coming down and laying itself along the paths of our earthly feet. This is Deity becoming brotherly and walking in the way with us for guidance and salvation. We must use some great language if we would cover with any explanation a range of such

purpose and power as the motive and aim of this one life. The greatest thing we can now say of it is that there is in it the Divine and the human in one Person. We may be able some day in larger knowledge to say something more simple and yet more complete than that. The Church even now is longing to be able to do so; her breast ever and again heaves with this desire; but perhaps she will not be able until there is "the manifestation of the sons of God," and she has received what God so sublimely calls "My new name." But, meanwhile, if we cannot say more, we cannot say less than "Thou seemest human and Divine."

"A ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven,"

There is a great scale of power in light. God said with a great voice, "Let there be light," when in its first stages creation was chaotic. It was God's ministering spirit commissioned and sent forth by Him then to establish order and beauty;

and there was nothing too hard for it. Like Manoah's angel, light always does wondrously ; indeed, many angels of varying ministry continually ascend and descend in it ; and God Himself ever stands above it. Light does many things for the world. It leads ; it quickens ; it sweetens and purifies. It makes a deep and silent appeal ; its power is secret and persuasive ; it runs very swiftly, but its footsteps are not heard. The Creator, who in making the earth made covenant with it, has in the light given angels charge concerning it to keep it in all its ways. God cannot do great things for man without doing lesser things also ; He does not make these distinctions that we make. So Jesus cannot do one thing for a man and not do at the same time ever so much. He cannot help him in one thing and not help him in all. He cannot touch him without transforming and transfiguring him. He cannot guide a life without quickening it till it becomes a new kind of life altogether ; and this new way of living

will be so little of the earth that it will suggest a life that cannot die because it is clothed in such fair colours and is so redolent of heaven.

"The light
of life."

Corresponding to the scale of power in light, a graduated scale of meaning may be found in this great sentence which Christ spoke concerning Himself. The words; in their suggestion, come very nigh us and offer us light for *leading*. To say no more, the light of a human life in Jesus Christ goes in the way before us, turning darkness into light, giving new turns and direction to our life, and determining our path by guiding steps. As we follow we imbibe a new spirit; we begin to live in a new and nobler way; we assimilate in a measure the life of Him who leads us, and we know our own life expanding to liberty and joy. We have the light of life and do not walk in darkness. As we go on after Jesus, shadows flee away; for He has been in every recess and intricacy of human experience, and has

walked every valley before us, and to follow is to be in the light. Merely as a human influence nothing is so inspiring, to enlarge and enhance our life, as the realisation of Christ's having been carried in all its perfectness and purity through the temptation and trial of those intense years of His; nothing is so potent as His Example to give bent and direction to other lives and to correct an evil bias and disenchant example that would mislead. But the words ascend above the mere human, and as we rise with their meaning nearer to the Divine, we come up to the level of a finer mystery and the play of a finer power in the light. Light does not create life, but it is of kindly kin to it. It finds life where it is hidden, and it *quickens*. It communicates something to that which was meant to live, and calls to it, "The winter is past; arise, my love, my fair one, and come away." This power also is in Jesus Christ, and His light has become the power of new life in men. A divinity has begun

to show in human nature, never dreamed of nor possible until His life touched ours. He appeals to life in men far beneath the surface of what is usually called life, and He brings forth in them a life which even despises and hates life that is lived on lower planes and with a poorer purpose. He enables men to live so that they become God-like in their thought and motive, and begets in them that life which always has been and from its very nature ever must be eternal. And still higher these words lift us up, until we begin to lose ourselves in the Infinite. For there is in Jesus, as there is in light, an inexpressible charm to *purify* and sweeten and beautify human life. He has changed the atmosphere and conditions of human existence. The sunshine brings life as if from serener spheres into these lower regions of life, so that our world knows in it the power of other worlds and breathes their spirit. It gives energy to the drooping flower and the common grass; it gives joy to the singing

bird and the humming bee ; it slays hideous Death with silver shafts, and it breathes into man the breath of God by enlarging His power to love. We are carried beyond the reach and help of words here as we are raised above the level of definite thought ; we come up into the region of suggestion and aspiration ; we feel rather than understand. But Jesus takes us there, and His spirit sustains us there ; when He touches our life with His own resurrection life, and makes us know within ourselves that a life of purity and love on earth is one with the life that He lived and lives with God in heaven. Who can deny, if we affirm in parable, that the beauty and fragrance and purity of our sun-lighted earth are the very presence and pressure of far and fairer worlds upon it ? And surely our Christ-lighted text warrants us to believe and say that God in Him is doing for our sin-stricken and darkened lives what every sunrise and summer do for the dark and the wintry world !

"Behold I
make all
things new."

If we think of life in any of its elementary forms amidst the effort and change of creation at the first, we may realise how little that life could have understood the great process going on around it. The secret and the great plan alike were with God. Perhaps almost as little can we now realise the greatness of the work which God is doing in the new spiritual creation now going on around us, by Jesus the Light of the world. A thousand years in this Genesis are as one day; and one day is as a thousand years. But along the lines of God's own thought and language regarding the first, we may guess and feel our way regarding this second creation; and we believe that God in Jesus Christ is changing this earth to be, in a higher sense than ever, a garden where He will again walk with men. To this happy end not only are new influences from God above bearing upon the world, but human nature is stirred at a diviner depth of its being. The world no longer knows merely

light divided from darkness, even though that was good, God-created and of God named Day, like that in which those saints of the earlier thousands of the years had to unfold their soul and bring forth fruit unto holiness; but a later day of God has now come, in which God has set that Light on high which rules over the firmament of the heaven, and human nature is now attaining to a growth and fruitfulness of which it might have been said of old, "It doth not yet appear." Much that was in human nature, placed there by God when He made man, remained long hidden and gave no sign to grow. There was not a Divine man to till the ground, to stir the soil and awaken our being to its fuller life, and there was only a mist going up from the ground to water it, no rain descending in drop and shower upon the place beneath to carry the influence of remoter regions to every root and fibre of our newly quickened being. When the fulness of the time came, it was not "Lo here!" or "Lo there!" but everywhere the

present God became manifest—in the relation of heaven to earth as when the sun shineth; in human nature putting forth “bright shoots of everlastingness,” as though earth at some mysterious depth in man had got grafted on heaven; and, in shine and shower, a Holy Spirit seeming to soften and sweeten the whole atmosphere of life. If we may, in some such suggestions as these, find God’s own thought and purpose as He works in this world of darkness by Christ as its Light, we can decipher the same purpose from the broken letters in which human experience is written. It has been said that there is not “a place on this planet ten miles square where a man may live in decency, comfort and security . . . a place where age is revered, infancy protected, manhood respected, womanhood honoured, and human life held in due regard . . . where the Gospel has not gone and cleared the way and laid the foundations and made decency and security possible”; and that fact is a human seal which we may reverently set to God’s

own word. And sure as we live and think and look out upon all the schemes and plans of human life, and estimate the speculations and philosophies of men, and regard even the noblest examples and lives of the world, we are only in utterest darkness as to what we are and whither we are going and what we ought chiefly to do, unless Jesus Christ was more than man and His work and word the very word and work of God. All the centuries of history through, human life has been only out in an Euroclydon storm; no sun nor moon nor star have appeared for a soul to steer by, and life has been but a drifting through the dark, and is so yet, if these words have not been fulfilled in Christ to humanity, "Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee."

While the glory of these words seems set above the heavens, and the whole horizon of human life has a wider hope under their

"If a man walk
in the night he
stumbleth."

influence, we may find their help greatest when we use them as a lamp unto our feet. We all have experiences of mind or heart or soul which are the same thing in our life as night is in the natural world; and in all of these experiences Christ may give us light. *Doubt* is one of these experiences. It is a form of darkness; it is intellectual bewilderment; it is the mind groping because it is in uncertainty as to what it should believe and think. This is a common form of darkness, and it is one for which many people have no sympathy and few people have enough. Yet it is a darkness both deep and sad; it is often a *long* darkness. There are hundreds of noble-hearted young men, and there are some very sad-eyed old ones, who are in intellectual perplexity. They are utterly in the mist about things. They have been driven from their old moorings in creeds and catechisms, as much as from the old geographical maps and historical romances and books of science which sufficed their fathers. They are perplexed between crea-

tion and evolution, as to the Divinity and humanity of Jesus Christ, concerning the authority of the Church and a man's right of private judgment, about fate and free-will. The world is as full of hard problems to-day as it ever was; and the only path of progress for any man must be through uncertainty and questioning. Doubt is not in itself wrong; it is inevitable in these days; and anything is better than clinging to any traditions merely because they are traditions. The doubt of a sincere and honest mind is often the preliminary to a steady and intelligent and enlarged faith. Yet there is another aspect of this matter. For, in the highest sense, Truth is always found when it is honestly and earnestly enough sought; there is an answer to every question which the human mind can reverently ask. But pity the man who poses merely as a doubter, who prides himself on negation, and who makes a virtue of being superficially and only sceptical! The true natural history of every forward thinker is that he passes

through the stage of doubt on his way to some positive faith. He lets go his hold of, and leaves behind, the wrack of other men's thoughts in the midst of which he finds himself, and he strikes forward until he can get foot-hold and hand-hold for himself; and then he leaves these things that are behind to drift their own way. If any one finds himself surrounded by shoals of old notions which he cannot accept, it is a poor business for him to keep beating back the floating driftwood: let him get hold of some positive truth, more essential, more sure, more satisfying; let him press forward!

"Whatever
doth make
manifest
light."

In the search after truth no man now can afford to shut his eyes, or give a secondary place, to the light which Jesus Christ has cast on human life. He has taught men the temper and spirit in which all truth is to be sought; and He has shown them the lines along which it lies. The light which He has thrown upon things may, without any exaggeration in this our age, be called

"the master-light of all our seeing." All our enquiries about things, and all our thoughts about ourselves, and all our social adjustments, lie within the compass of His life and teaching. The dark lands of the world are those where Christ is not known about; the dark lives of our own land are those in which He is not recognised. All mediæval learning struck root and flourished where His influence was most felt; and all our modern discovery and progress have been made in countries where human life has been under the sway of His. We may not be able to explain it, but we cannot deny that men never think to any purpose nor exert to any great result now-a-days, except in countries where, more or less directly, there is illumination from Christ Jesus. Surely, then, it must be a wise thing for every one who wishes to understand things, so as to have a wise working theory of life, to go out upon the search in the light of that Life which has shone like the sun upon all progressive human life. Every earnest man has

to make his earnest intellectual adventure setting out in twilight thickening to darkness, his mind crowded with difficulty and doubt, and talking seriously and sadly to whatever companion he has found in the way. Let him in that quest remember that Jesus said, "I am the Light of the world"; and let his desire for light become a prayer for the knowledge and presence of Christ; and, in the most unmistakable and real way, he will, in Christ's light, see light clearly.

"Who is
among you
that walketh
in darkness
and hath no
light?"

If doubt be darkness of
mind, sorrow is darkness of
heart; and we may remember
this in connection with what

Christ says in our text. A clear, sure-seeing intellect does a great deal for a man, no doubt; but is it not his heart that is the light of his life? A man cannot live by merely being sure about things; indeed, the things that we can be quite sure about do not count nearly as much in the making of a man's life as the powers that are dim and intangible and vague.

Far more people are influenced by the instinct and yearning of their heart than by all the ordered thoughts of their brain. And when anything darkens their heart, how great is that darkness! How their life loses itself, goes a-drifting, a-wandering—it knows not whither! Some men sit down dissatisfied, disappointed in the midst of their most elaborate and complete theory of life; it has not satisfied their *heart*! Some are only saddened by their life's success; it has set a neglected heart an-aching! Others are drawn on into the thick and press of brain-work and business by some illusive dream of love and rest, which is the inspiration of all their effort; and, as they approach the goal for which they had strained mind and body, the vision of their heart fades away. Some are too trustful, some too timid; some get wronged, some disabled; some have a sorrow, some a sin; but to every one more or less life turns out so different from what their heart desired that a sense of unsatisfactoriness and

failure clouds them. They lose love, they lose joy, they lose hope, they lose heart, and they walk in darkness—the higher lights of their life having gone out. Or, should a man retain his composure and power in the strain of life, and feel himself adequate to all its vicissitudes until he has seen many years, does not death sooner or later strike so near him and leave him so bereft that he is himself stunned and blinded by the stroke, and has to stagger onward thereafter with a darkened heart to the end? This seems to be the order in human life. The more human any man is, the finer and more tender his heart will be, and the greater his capacity for pain; and the apter he will be to have the gentle lights of his life blown out, so that he will be left to walk like a man in the dark.

"I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice." The life of Jesus Christ casts a comforting light upon human life when we regard it as liable and likely to be thus darkened by sorrow,

disappointment and loss. In the light of His life, the darkest life is brightened ; and He can give out of His own light to each one whose life is beclouded and helpless. The compass of His experiences takes in all human experience of trial and sorrow. His ideally beautiful and perfect life takes in, and in part is made up of, these inevitable griefs and pains ; and it harmonises these with the divinest joys. We must neither on the one hand think of Jesus as being only a man of sorrows, nor on the other think of Him as having lived a life of satisfaction and success. He was a man of joys, the finest and most perfect joy, as truly as He was a man of sorrow ; and, as to success or failure in life, He lived so as to leave the best results of His life to be realised afterwards. We must not look at and think of only one side of the life of Christ ; we must regard it in its complete circuit and compass—reaching out here to the most perfect joy, and there to the strangest sorrow ; and we must learn when

we speak of human life to keep before us no limited and poor life like yours and mine, but this *standard* Life (if we may so say reverently enough!) by which men now judge, and by which at the last God Himself will set His judgment. What word, then, does this ideal life of Jesus speak to those who are in the bewilderment of lost love and darkened hopes and death's shadows? It says: "I am the Light of the world; and he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness." It does not call us to stoical indifference—to cut off and cast from us the wounded and bleeding love which it cannot medicine or heal. It says: "Come unto Me" and "Learn of Me," and "Ye shall find rest unto your souls." It stirs a still deeper part of our nature; it awakens the immortality within us in all its diviner resource and desire; it brings the Eternal to the relief of that hurt which Time has inflicted; it carries our frustrated hopes forward and commits them to the care of an endless future, and of life's saddest

extremities it makes the great opportunities of God. Whenever the sad heart has to walk its darkest way, Jesus in the beauty of His own transfigured sorrow leads forward, and His word is "Let not your heart be troubled."

"Awake thou
that sleepest,
and Christ
shall give
thee light."

But there is sadder darkness than that of either mind or heart. Sooner or later an awful experience comes over every human soul, when it knows itself in darkness; when it feels that it has lost its eternal bearings and its immortal way amidst these scenes of earth and time. The soul of man is a child of Eternity. It cannot be at home here. It must be consciously making its way across time back to God in eternity, or it must feel and own itself *lost*. We may have a memory of being lost in a wood or on the moor; or in a great city at night, when we could neither tell our tale nor ask our way; and we may know that utter confusion which comes into our whole being the moment that the conviction comes

over us that we are *lost*. Such spiritually was Jacob's experience at Peniel. He was left alone; he felt that he was alone; he was lonely. The night felt all around him like a gulf of darkness that had opened, and the stars seemed the twinkling lights of a homeless city. He had no one to speak to, and he knew not whither to turn. He had lost all his bearings, and his memory and conscience rose up within him in anarchy. His immortal soul was bewildered and confounded; and he had a sense of being *lost*, [and what echoes that word makes and multiplies when heard in the dark!] until God showed him the way wherein he should walk and let him go at the breaking of the day. In every Christian life there is a spiritual counterpart to this experience; ere the end, or at the end, every life will know it. Unhappiest of all things ever created must a soul be if it too late knows itself lost—irretrievably lost! and irrecoverably dark its fate if it must drift out into Eternity not knowing its own destiny!

"Poor little pretty fluttering thing!
Must we no longer live together?
And dost thou preen thy trembling wing,
To take thy flight, thou know'st not whither?
Thy humorous vein—thy pleasing folly,
Lies all neglected—all forgot!
And pensive, wavering, melancholy,
Thou dread'st and hop'st—thou know'st not what."

The most real experience in human life, dwarfing the importance of all other experiences and sweeping them into a train of attendant service to do homage to itself, is when the soul, lost in its own darkness, knows Jesus Christ draw near as the Light of its life. The word that makes all things new is heard when in upon the hesitating and bewildered soul—in through its darkness and amongst its perils—in amidst its fears and in spite of its forebodings—breaks this promise, "He that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness." This is the word of God's sent and Saviour Son; and its light is that of a Life the ministry of which is not only nor most to alleviate and heal in us what is now broken or wronged, and

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THE BREAKING OF THE DAY 159

to sweeten what sin has made impure, but
in the truest sense to infuse into the soul of
man its true life, the life of God, the life that
is eternal.

FINIS.